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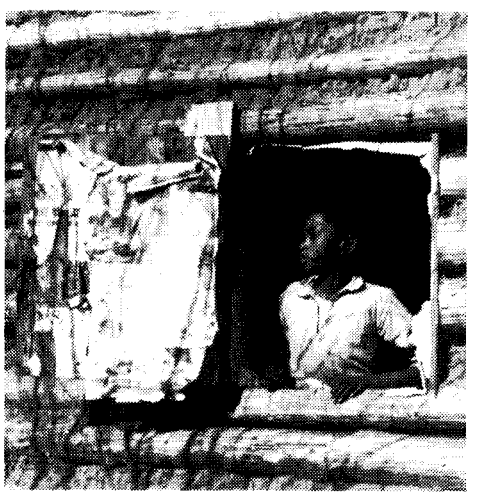

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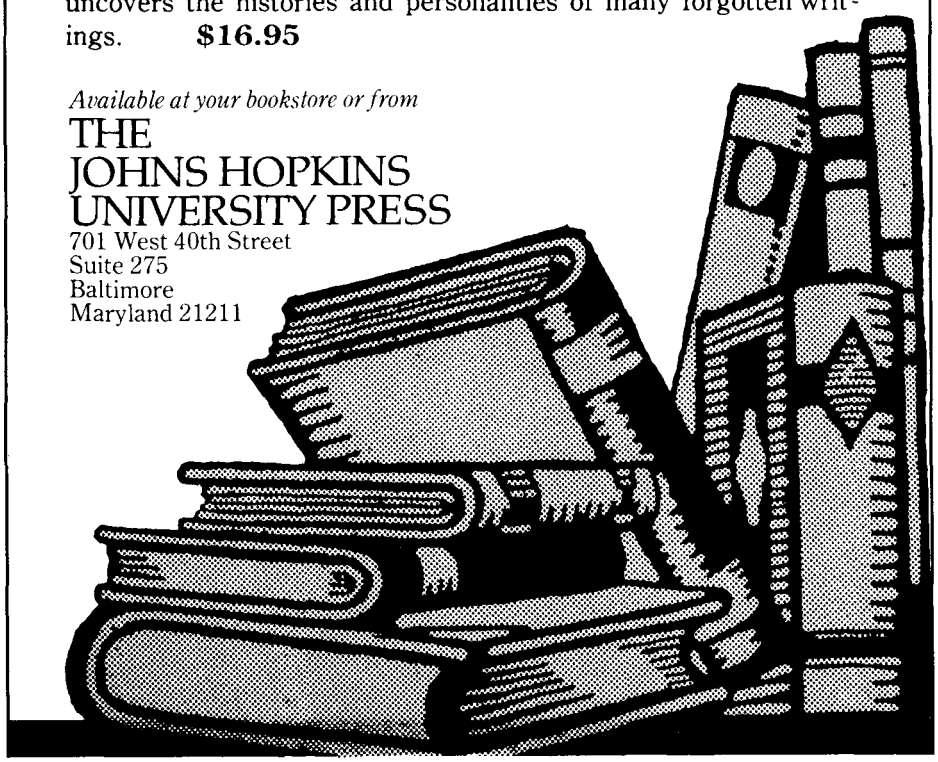

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Out of My Mind

Au Flair

L'écriture—c'est un dróle de truc.
—Marguerite Duras in an appearance on "Apostrophes"

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

Regular viewers of the extraordinary French television program "Apostrophes"—which is broadcast every Friday evening at 9:25 P.M. on Antenne 2—were not surprised on a program, which took place not long ago, to find its host, Bernard Pivot, surrounded by eight authors. "Apostrophes" is a program about books. It is also a lot more, but, at the very least, it is a program about books. As Pivot does every week, he had grouped the authors around a sort of common theme. This program was called *Çà vas pas la tête*, which is the reply a Frenchman might make if asked if he could fly. All of the books had, more or less, to do with what was in, or on, the head.

Two redheaded authors, for example, had written a book about redheads. They claimed, with what degree of seriousness I am not sure, that Shakespeare was redheaded. Pivot, who has a delightful laugh, emitted a peal of laughter that indicated what he thought of the idea. There was a book about "headhunters"—people (and this is apparently novel in France) who look for people to hire. There was also a book about insomnia. Pivot remarked that while, as a rule, he slept very well, after reading the book, which was called *Éloge de l'insomnie*, he had not been able to sleep at all. Probably the centerpiece of the program was a book put together by three graphic artists who go under their last names—Mulatier, Ricord, and Morchoisne. Their speciality is turning people into animals and vice versa. They had made quite a splash in France with their two previous books *Le Livre d'or des Grandes Gueules*, which has a drawing of Ronald Reagan on the cover, and its successor *Ces Animaux qui nous gouvernent*, which has a drawing of Mitterrand on the cover along with the announcement—supplied by the authors—that the book was a "Bêtes-seller." In their new book, *Télé ton univers impitoyable*, some twenty-six prominent French television personalities are transformed into animals that range from beavers to ducks. In a series of four drawings, Pivot is transformed into—or from, depending on the order in which one looks at the drawings—a teddy bear. Indeed, his pleasant roundish face does have a teddy-bearish quality, and when Pivot looked at the drawings, he said that he thought the authors had him about right. "A panther would have been quite wrong," he added.

This program was also typical since it was watched by at least two million viewers. The weekly audience varies between two and six million viewers, depending on the subject matter, which is announced at least a week in advance. The two programs that he did in 1983 with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, in Solzhenitsyn's home in Vermont, drew at least six million viewers. He has also done one-on-one interviews with a few other writers, such as Vladimir Nabokov and Marguerite Duras. Although all of the interviews are in French—Pivot speaks only French—there have been a few American or British authors, such as William Styron or Norman Mailer, on the program. On one notable occasion, Alec Guinness, whose autobiography had just been translated into French, demonstrated to Pivot how he had taught his parrot to recite "To be or not to be. . . ." Pivot was much amused.

Apart from its astonishing popularity,

JEREMY BERNSTEIN's autobiographical memoir *The Life It Brings* has recently been published by Ticknor & Fields.

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"Apostrophes" is equally astonishing for its longevity. The first program was on January 10, 1975, and at the rate of some fifty a year, the five hundredth program was on Friday, September 25, 1985. It was just a week later when, fortunately for me since I live in New York and not in Paris, "Apostrophes" was first shown in the United States. This was the result of a negotiation between the City University of New York (CUNY) television station—Channel A—and Henri Herve, who is in charge of audiovisuals at the French embassy's cultural affairs department. City University initially bought the rights to the forty-eight programs that had been made in 1984, and ever since has been showing "Apostrophes" on a repeat basis—several times a week. The programs are shown with no concessions to the English-speaking viewer at all. There are no subtitles and no simultaneous translations. But for someone with a working knowledge of French, they are a pure delight.

After watching "Apostrophes" week after week for several months, I got the notion that I would like to meet Pivot. I mentioned this to several French friends and their general answer was "Join the club. *Everyone* would like to meet Pivot." Pivot, it seems, was noted for his insistence on being, as they say nowadays, "a private person." When any of his guests on the program attempted to use the occasion to learn something about Pivot himself, he or she was quickly informed that such inquiries were not welcome. I decided to put my case to the cultural affairs department at the French embassy in New York, and *par force des choses* I was routed to Henri Herve. Herve was sympathetic but pointed out that Pivot was very much his own person and that my best chance was to approach him directly or through his longtime assistant Anne-Marie Bourgnon, part of whose job is to schedule the rare interviews Pivot does give.

Sometime in the spring of 1986 I wrote what I thought was a touching and lucid request for an interview. There was no response whatever. This puzzling state of affairs persisted the entire summer. Finally, late in August I asked a French friend of mine, posing as my assistant, to call Anne-Marie Bourgnon in Paris. (I had been given the phone number along with whatever newspaper and magazine articles were available about Pivot by Henri Herve.) I reasoned that having someone who spoke absolutely fluent French might make a better impression than if I called. Not long afterward my friend was able to get through to Mme Bourgnon, who turned out to be extremely friendly. She said that, for some reason, my earlier letters had never reached them and that if I would call back in person and explain exactly what I had in mind she thought that Pivot could spare some time. A few days later I called Paris myself and spoke to Anne-Marie Bourgnon. She said that the only day that Pivot did interviews was Monday, so we made a date at the odd time of 6:00 P.M. for Monday, October 6, at Pivot's offices in the building on the avenue Montaigne that is the headquarters for Antenne 2. When I asked if there was any possibility of seeing how Pivot goes about preparing a program, she laughed and said that Pivot prepares for programs by staying home and reading books. On the other hand, she added, I would be perfectly welcome to be a studio guest at the program for the following Friday.

As everyone knows, Paris this past fall was not one of the world's happiest places. After the terrorist bombs had gone off, killing or maiming scores of innocent people, a very heavy police presence was brought into the city. It reminded me of the time I was living there during the Algerian War when the great fear was that the army, or part of it, was going to try to take over the city by force. One could not—last fall—go into one's hotel or into a department store without having one's belongings, or oneself, searched, and there was the constant whining of police sirens. Notwithstanding, the weather was exceptionally warm and sunny. I decided, terrorists or no, to walk from my hotel on the Left Bank to Antenne 2, which is located in one of the plusher neighborhoods near the Champs-Elysées on the Right Bank. Apart from the exercise, I also wanted to conduct an investigation. In some of the newspaper and magazine accounts of "Apostrophes" that Herve had supplied me, it said that such was the influence of the program on the sale of individual books that bookstores in France had taken to having special sections—often with pictures of the authors—devoted to books that had been featured on the program. I wanted to see for myself if this was true.

The first bookstore I wandered into was one

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of those delightful small shops one finds on the Left Bank. When I asked the proprietress if she had a table devoted to "Apostrophes," she laughed and said no, adding that her bookstore was mainly devoted to books about General de Gaulle. But then she fished out several books that she said had been on the program recently. In the larger bookstores, I did, indeed, find such sections, with varying displays. By the time I finished my sojourn and found my way to the somewhat garish Antenne 2 building, it was 5:30 P.M. After being given a thorough once-over by an armed guard, I was allowed upstairs, only to find that Pivot had not yet arrived. I was then sent downstairs where I sat for a half hour, watching several television screens that seemed to be showing the same cartoon. Promptly at six, I was once again summoned upstairs.

For one of the major television personalities in France, Pivot has an office that is remarkably modest, and he shares it with Anne-Marie Bourgnon, an attractive dark-haired woman whom I would guess to be in her forties. It might be the office of an English professor in a modern provincial university. Both desks were uncluttered, and the only books visible were piled neatly in a small stack near Pivot's desk. Two things strike one at once about Pivot. He is much shorter than one would guess from watching him on television—somewhere in the middle five-foot range, I would imagine. He is about the same size as a typical professional soccer player, something that is not entirely irrelevant, since Pivot, as I read in the interviews, is an absolutely fanatic soccer fan. He will travel nearly anywhere to watch an important soccer match and has even given soccer commentaries on French television. The second thing that strikes one about Pivot is his eyes. They are a sort of shiny button brown, and they look at one with a shrewd expectant curiosity, as if to say, "The ball is in your court—now play." Pivot wears glasses, and he chews on the stems both in private conversation and during his television program. After the briefest of introductions, he asked me, "What would you like to know?"

I told Pivot that I had read everything I could find about him but that there was so little about his life that the information I had barely filled a half page of my notebook. He laughed and said he was sure he had told the interviewers everything. In any case he was willing to say a little about himself. "My birth," he began, "turns on the number five. I was born in the fifth hour, of the fifth day, of the fifth month in the year 1935 in Lyons. My parents were grocers. When I was very young we moved to Quincié-en-Beaujolais in the wine country not far from Lyons. Our family has a vineyard, and my brother Jean Charles is in the wine business." I later learned that Pivot has a sister Anne-Marie, who teaches German in a lycée. I asked Pivot if any of his family had been readers. "No, no," he said, "apart from my sister and myself there are absolutely no other intellectuals in my family. No one else in my family reads anything except the newspapers." Pivot's wife, Monique, is also a journalist and, presumably, a reader. He has two daughters, Agnes and Cecille, who are in their early twenties. Cecille, the younger one, is still in the university, while the older one, Agnes, works in public relations. "One of them reads," Pivot noted, without specifying which one, "and the other doesn't. In my family my reading is something bizarre. You know it is a little like with a flock of ducks. Among the white ones there is a black or red one. In my family I am somewhat of a black duck."

Much of Pivot's childhood was taken up playing soccer. He played on a local team and, apart from the reading that was necessary in order to pass his baccalauréat, he did little more. After having taken his "bac," Pivot studied law for a time. "I found it boring so I took the examination to enter the Centre du Formation des Journalistes." This is the entity located in Paris where many French journalists receive their training. "We got," Pivot told me, "a multimedia culture—a little sport, a little politics, a little economy, so that one could make one's way as a journalist." After graduating from the Centre—"I did rather well there," he noted with a smile—Pivot needed a job as some kind of apprentice. "Completely by chance," Pivot explained, "I found myself in a literary journal"—the now defunct *Figaro littéraire*. "I did not have the slightest disposition or culture that led me to join a literary magazine. It was pure chance. I am an 'enfant du hasard.' If my first job had been with a sports journal, then I would have become a sports journalist. As I told you,

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when I was young I played soccer rather than read, but when I joined *Figaro littéraire* I began to read. The more I read, the more I found that I enjoyed reading. I tried to recapture all that lost time when I didn't read. I now realize that that time can never be completely made up. Reading things when one is young is like learning to play tennis. If you learn to play tennis when you are a child, your strokes will become natural and will be with you for life; but if you learn as an adult, they are never quite correct. The same thing with my reading. There are enormous gaps, especially with foreign literature. I know, for example, next to nothing about Chinese or Japanese literature. With a program like 'Apostrophes' I am really required to focus on books that are available in France, although, from time to time, I do invite foreign writers."

Pivot's career with *Figaro littéraire* and then, after it collapsed, with *Le Figaro* itself, lasted until 1974. By that time he had become the "chef du service littéraire"—the editor in charge of books. Until he was thirty-six—a couple of years before he left *Le Figaro*—Pivot had had no experience with television. "Unlike most of my contemporaries on French television, who started very young, I didn't. One day, when I was still at *Le Figaro*, I was asked if I would like to do a television program about books. It was a complete surprise. I had never thought of doing television. But, somehow, they thought I had a flair and that it might work. Many of my colleagues had presented synopses of how they would do such a program. I had presented nothing, but I said I would try. What journalist would refuse that kind of chance."

I asked Pivot if anyone had suggested any kind of format apart from the fact that the program would deal with books. "No," he said, "I was told to do anything I wanted to do so long as it succeeded. I began with a program that I called 'Ouvrez les guillemets' [open quotes] which had no theme. I simply invited writers and critics to talk about books. However, I quickly realized that what was missing was a theme. A theme would give a dramatic coherence to each program. So I introduced themes and it worked." It worked so well that his boss at *Le Figaro*, Jean d'Ormesson, informed Pivot in 1974 that he would have to choose between the newspaper and television. Pivot chose television. He has never regretted the choice and has even named his pool in his country house in Quincié-en-Beaujolais the Piscine Jean d'Ormesson. In 1975 Pivot changed television networks from Antenne 1 to Antenne 2 and created "Apostrophes," which was a success from the very beginning.

I told Pivot that, as an American television viewer, knowing that books programs like his had never become national institutions in the U.S. the way "Apostrophes" has become in France, it was very difficult for me to understand how this had happened. Pivot replied very frankly, "I don't understand it either. Often French people ask me 'Why does it work?' I don't know. It may be, and I am not certain of my response, it may be by a kind of accord, a little fragile, a little secret, a little difficult to explain between the theme of the program which I have chosen, and the fact that I have worked very hard for each program. The authors know that I have read each of their books very carefully. Often television journalists don't make the effort to read all those books. In fact, the American writers when they appear on my program often say, 'It's remarkable. You have actually read the book.' Of *course* I have read their books. It's the very least I can do. Nonetheless, it is still not really explicable. I don't talk any better than anyone else. I have a round face. Perhaps it is because I never discourage television viewers by giving them a complex. People who don't write and don't read always have a complex vis-à-vis intellectuals or writers. I have always tried to bridge this gap. The writers I invite speak clearly, so people don't have a complex about it." A French friend of mine put it very succinctly. "Pivot asks just the kind of questions of an author that we would like to ask but would be afraid to." Pivot himself said, "I am more a television viewer than an intellectual. I have always said that the television viewer who watches the program the most closely is myself. I like to surprise the viewers so that they never have the feeling of having seen the same thing twice—so that they never know quite what to expect."

This kind of meticulous preparation, which is evident after watching only a few minutes of any "Apostrophes" program—Pivot's books, the ones he brings to the program, are festooned with notes and pieces of paper

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sticking out of them like so many brightly-colored bandoliers from the hide of a bull in a bullfight—requires that he do an enormous amount of reading. He receives from publishers at least twenty-five books a day, all of which he opens himself and at least glances through. At the end of each program, he briefly presents books related to the subject at hand and his opinion about them. If he has not had the chance to read a book, he will say so candidly and perhaps remark that it looks interesting to him. He reads, he told me, at least six hours a day—sometimes as much as fourteen—every day of the week except Monday, when he receives visitors like myself. He reads more than three hundred pages a day nearly every day. "On Thursday and Friday," he said, "I spend the whole day reading in preparation for my program and also on the weekends. It's not a disagreeable way to spend one's time."

In addition to doing his weekly program, Pivot also does occasional television specials in which he interviews people not necessarily in the literary world. I have not seen any of them, but viewers of them have said that this is not a format that Pivot seems very comfortable in. He has also for the past eleven years edited a slick monthly literary magazine, which is called simply *Lire*, with a circulation of about 125,000.

One might imagine that with all of this Pivot might simply get fed up with books and writers. In fact, in 1982 he nearly quit. "I was tired of reading. I wanted to do something else. I wanted to go to more movies and soccer games, to travel. I thought I would quit for a year and then see." Just at that moment Regis Debray, one of Mitterrand's cultural counselors, saw fit in a speech in Montreal—"Apostrophes" is also seen in French-speaking Canada, as well as Belgium—to launch an unexpected violent attack against Pivot and "Apostrophes," in which he accused Pivot of exercising a veritable dictatorship over the sale of books in France. However, it turned out that Mitterrand himself was a fan of the program, and nothing more was heard from that quarter. But it did arouse Pivot. "I decided to stay just out of a spirit of contradiction. Then my fatigue disappeared and I am still here. One day, I don't yet know when, I will have had enough and will stop."

Part of what seems to keep Pivot on an even keel is his "rules of the road." He does not, as a rule, attend literary salons or cocktail parties. Very few of his friends are writers. When, occasionally, someone appears on "Apostrophes" whom Pivot knows from elsewhere, he shares that fact with the audience and tells the person that they should *tutoyer* if that has been the nature of their relationship. Pivot will not accept any medals or awards in connection with his program. Recently, the Friends of New York University in France invited Pivot to be their guest of honor at a luncheon at which they wanted to award him a medal. He said he would be willing to come to the luncheon, but would not accept the medal. He was willing, however, to accept a T-shirt that had been designed in honor of the occasion. I asked Pivot why he felt that way. He answered, "One should compensate the creators. It is absolutely necessary to compensate them with the Legion of Honor, medals, money, diplomas—all sorts of things. But I am not a creator. I am an intermediary between those who create and those who consume. There is no reason to reward people like myself. Reserve your medals for the creators—whoever they are—but not for people like myself who work in the service of the creators."

Another thing that keeps Pivot from losing his sense of perspective is that he maintains his roots in his childhood home of Quincié-en-Beaujolais. I had even read that for several years he had been *maire adjoint*—the assistant mayor—of the village. I asked Pivot what that meant in practical terms. "There is the mayor," he explained, "but when he isn't there it is the adjoint who decides things. Fortunately, the mayor was always there, except in the month of August. Now the grape growers in Beaujolais do what everyone else in France does in August. They leave on vacation for Greece or St.-Tropez or somewhere. On the other hand, I take my vacations in the month of August in Beaujolais, so I was responsible for making the decisions. One of the things that I did was to officiate at marriages, which was an activity that interested me a great deal. I found it very relaxing. It's a small village, so we didn't have that many marriages, but the ones we did have I found very agreeable, and that's what I remember most from my term as *maire adjoint*."

The five hundred and forty-ninth "Apostro-

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phes," which was broadcast Friday, October 10, 1986, was in many ways typical. In the first place it lasted seventy-five minutes, a length of time Pivot had decided was about right for his program. ("Apostrophes" has run at seventy-five minutes since its inception. When I asked Pivot how he had arrived at the figure of seventy-five minutes, he said, "By chance," and left it at that.) In the second place, the program had a provocative title—in this case, *"Pudeur et Impudeur"* (Modesty and Immodesty). As is customary, both the contents of the program and its title had been decided at least three weeks before the program itself. In fact, when I visited Pivot in his office I noticed a neat blackboard on which the next few "Apostrophes" programs had been laid out. Pivot told me that three weeks is enough of a lead time to notify the authors and to read whatever books he has to read. The authors are never contacted personally—part of Pivot's determination to keep himself aloof from any pressure that personal contact might bring to bear when it comes to selecting authors for "Apostrophes." Normally his assistant Anne-Marie Bourgnon calls the publisher, who then, in turn, notifies what one assumes must be the delighted author. I don't know how many, if any, authors who have been asked to appear on "Apostrophes" have turned down the opportunity.

Like all "Apostrophes," this one was announced in the television journals at least a week in advance, with the title of the program, the authors to be interviewed, and a brief statement of who they are and what they have written about. Pivot often asks his guests for comments about each other's work, which they are presumed to have read before appearing on the program. This can lead to some pointed exchanges, such as the time that Jean Luc Godard informed an apparently innocuous film critic that he wasn't interested in listening to his opinion. Like most "Apostrophes"—the one-on-one interviews being the exceptions—this five hundred forty-ninth program had a small studio audience, although this time around the audience included me.

The programs are done in the Maison de Radio France, a curious, round building in the XVIth arrondisement, overlooking the Seine. Anne-Marie Bourgnon had told me I should be there at 9:00 P.M., which seemed a little late for a program that was to begin thirty-five minutes later. So as not to miss anything, I arrived early, only to find out that there was nothing to miss. I had a coffee in a nearby café and returned at 9:00 P.M. A guard at the door asked my name and then located it on a list of guests, which had been left at the door. The studio itself is on the first floor, and when I got to it, since the door to it was closed, I, along with the other guests, and a few of the authors, milled around outside. I caught sight of Anne-Marie Bourgnon, who was dressed in a festive red-and-black striped outfit. She came over, and I remarked that a couple of young people, whom I took to be among the writers invited for that evening, seemed very nervous. She said that once Pivot began talking to them they would forget that they were on television. One of Pivot's special qualities is to show such an interest in an author's book, which he has read thoroughly, that the author does appear to forget that he or she is on television. It was now a few minutes after 9:00 and there was no sign of Pivot. We were all—about forty of us—admitted to the studio and divided into two groups by Anne-Marie Bourgnon. One group of us was taken to the floor of the studio just below the platform on which Pivot and the authors would be located. I had often noticed during "Apostrophes" images of what seemed to be a studio audience, and it became clear that this evening our group would be part of those images. The other group (I have no idea of how the division was made) arranged themselves in the rows of seats that were out of camera range.

I had gathered from reading the television guide for that week that the *vedette* of the program that evening was a writer and historian named Jacques Laurent, who also, God knows why, writes under the name Cecil Saint-Laurent. Under his historian name, Jacques Laurent was to present two books this evening: one—a bit off the theme of the program—was an homage to Martine Carol, for which he had written the introduction, and the other, in the spirit of the program, was a book called *Histoire imprévue des dessous féminins*, which, as the pictures in the television journals made abundantly clear, had to do with changing attitudes toward and styles in lingerie. Viewers of "Apostrophes" are accustomed to the fact that Pivot and his guests discuss sexual matters with the good-natured frankness one tends, rightly or wrongly, to

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attribute to French drawing-room conversation. As I took my place, I observed M. Laurent surrounded by a buzzing horde of photographers, whose animated activity reminded one of sharks in a feeding frenzy. Laurent, who had been a guest on the program previously, seemed to take all of the attention calmly.

Having finished with M. Laurent, the photographers turned their attention to the other guests. There were three: a young Belgian literary critic and historian named Jean-Claude Bologne, whose book was called, appropriately, *Histoire de la pudeur;* a still younger French historian named Anne Vincent Buffault, who had written a book with the fascinating title *Histoire des larmes* (History of tears); and an older woman named Elisabeth Roudinesco, who was presenting the second and final volume of her book entitled *La Bataille de 100 ans Histoire de la psychanalyse en France, 1925–1985.*

At nine minutes after 9:00 P.M. Pivot walked into the studio, wearing his overcoat and carrying a stack of books. He makes it a matter of principle to arrive in the studio a little after the authors so that, once again, he need not socialize with any of them before the program. Up to this point, the authors have received no inkling of how the program is going to proceed and certainly no inkling of the kind of questions Pivot might ask. There is, by the way, no attempt at all to "warm up" the studio audience. Pivot bustled around shaking a few hands and tending to a few details, and at 9:25 he sat the authors down on the podium and told them in what order he intended to call on them. As a rule, this is decided by Pivot in advance, although for one program on which he had five novelists, he had the youngest of them, a young woman of twenty-three, pick the names of the novelists to be called on from slips of paper that had been put into what looked like a coffee mug. This contact, which takes place only a few minutes before airtime, was the only contact Pivot has had with these authors before the program. At 9:28 the sound from the previous program on Antenne 2, which was, of all things, "*Deux Flics a Miami*"—a re-run of one of the episodes of "Miami Vice," which is, along with "Dallas," a great favorite in France—was turned on in the studio. That was followed by five minutes of commercials, which, although they had the advantage of being in French—Monsieur Propre, alias Mister Clean—were no more interesting than our own. At the moment, all three television networks (although this is about to change) belong to the government. Nonetheless, there are commercials. But these occur only between the programs—several minutes' worth. To interrupt a program like "Apostrophes" for a commercial would be, at least at present, unthinkable in France.

At 9:34 a voice over the loudspeaker announced "*une minute,*" and at exactly 9:35 the extract from the Rachmaninoff First Piano Concerto, which serves as the theme for "Apostrophes," could be heard. Pivot made a brief opening statement and the program began. In addition to asking the various authors about their books, Pivot acts as both an agitator and a moderator for the colloquies among the authors. During my talk with him, he told me that his criticism of the program now, if he had one, is that it has become too mannered—too restrained. Perhaps he was thinking with nostalgia of the time the American beatnik author Charles Bukowski, who had drunk more than his share of white wine, became overly vociferous on the program and had to be forcibly ejected from the studio. Pivot takes great delight in presenting authors whose views are diametrically opposed and encouraging them to have at each other by citing various pointed passages from each author. This becomes especially savory if, as sometimes happens, one of the authors is a prominent politician. On this evening's program he seemed to have the opposite problem. Two of the authors, both of whom had written a very interesting book, were so much younger than the other two that they ran the risk of being run over. Pivot is very solicitous of young writers and makes sure that they get their fair share of the program.

As I watched, it became once again clear to me how different television is from the theater. From my vantage point in the audience, below the raised platform, I might as well have been watching a play with actors on the stage. In fact, Pivot's familiar gestures of tinkering with his glasses, and the like, seen from this vantage point seemed almost mannered, and one could sense the strain in some of his guests. One could watch them, for example, clutch their hands. However, when I watched the program on one of the television monitors

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that were scattered around the studio—I could occasionally even watch myself watching myself—it all seemed to come back into focus. Everyone seemed at ease and the mannerisms regained their charm. Pivot must have some instinctive sense of this—*le flair*—in the same way he has an instinctive sense of what combinations of books and authors will fit together to make a coherent and dramatic evening. There are other television personalities on French television who deal with books, but in watching them one has a sense that something is missing. I would be hard put to say exactly what that was, in the same way that I would be hard put to say exactly why one person is charming and another isn't.

By the time the program was over we had learned in what centuries it was fashionable to cry in public in France and in what centuries—the present for example—it wasn't. We had learned that the nobility had bathed in public and when statues acquired fig leaves, and we had also learned what Parisians were wearing *dessous* this year. I will have to wait until I see the re-run of the program on the City University channel before I can get a real sense of how it turned out. As is customary after the program, Pivot invited both the authors and the audience, who seemed largely to be composed of friends of the authors, for a drink outside the studio in the lobby of the building, where a table was set up. Because of his diminutive size, Pivot seemed almost lost in the gaggle of authors being variously congratulated on their performances. When he saw me, he came over to say hello. I recalled something that I had read about "Apostrophes"—that it had taught the French to read. Pivot laughed and then said, "That is what it's there for."

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Student Evaluation

ARISTIDES

Socrates may have had to take the hemlock, but at least he was spared the indignity of that relatively recent addition to the teaching transaction known as "teacher evaluation." On these evaluations, generally made during the last minutes of the final session of the college term, students, in effect, grade their teachers. Hemlock may on occasion seem preferable, for turnabout here can sometimes be cruel play, especially when students, under the veil of anonymity, take the opportunity of evaluation to comment upon their teacher's dress, or idiosyncrasies, or moral character. For the most part I have not fared too badly on these evaluations, though my clothes have been the subject of faint comedy, my habit of jiggling the change in my pockets and my wretched handwriting have been noted, and in one instance I have been accused of showing favoritism (a charge I choose to interpret as my preference, in the classroom, for calling upon the relatively intelligent over the completely obtuse). None of these student comments, as you can plainly see, affects me in the least; such personal criticisms roll right off me, like buckshot off a duck's heart.

Unless they have long since been rendered catatonic by boredom, or are people on whom everything is lost, teachers of course make similar observations about their students—certainly this teacher does—and the one subject on which all teachers ought to be connoisseurs is that of the studentry. The difference is that teachers, unlike contemporary students, must keep these observations to themselves. Yet observe one will, nothing for it, and sometimes, as I am standing before a class, the subject of observation, I am myself observing my observers observing me. In this particular zoo, it is not always clear who is the tourist and who the ape. I do know that I carry the mental equivalent of a camera with me whenever I step into a classroom, and it is always clicking away, the monster of observation in me perpetually at work. To alter Christopher Isherwood slightly, "I am a chimera."

"Ah, Miss Fogelson, you nod exuberantly, smiling in broad agreement, as if to say, 'I take your point exactly.' All quarter long you imply that you have taken my points. Your smiling nods are meant to convey that we are in some sort of intellectual complicity and are obviously on the same wave length. But beneath that nodding, invariably agreeable smile, why do I sense that in the high noon of your soul you are tuned to a hard rock AM station?"

"Mr. Gold, you scowl, sometimes fully glower, at what I say, which implies passion for and penetration into the subject under discussion, which your contemptuous countenance suggests I am making a terrible hash of. I would more readily believe in your perturbation had I not had the displeasure of having read your midterm examination, which reveals you to have greater control over your facial muscles than over your punctuation."

"Mr. Kantor, sitting in the back of the room, what are you whispering to and then laughing with Miss Reilly about? Have I stumbled verbally—committed a lip-o, the aural equivalent of a typo—resulting in my having mistakenly said something lewd? Is there a shred of broccoli from lunch stuck between my front teeth? Can my fly be open? Damn it, kiddo, what is so blasted amusing?"

"Miss Simpson, need you look so young and fresh and uncomplicatedly beautiful? Your earnest, not very clever presence in this hall of learning is a distraction to a dry man in a cold month, being without much joy, waiting for brains."

Thus does my mental camera click away, ever on the lookout for one or another kind of

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student performance. Of course, I much prefer the genuine article, bright students truly interested in learning, of whom I have had more than my fair share. But my mind is naturally attracted to falsity in student behavior, for I have in my own time been a nodder and smiler, a scowler and glowerer, a whisperer and laugher. For the better part of my sixteen years of formal schooling, I was a fake, a boy and then a young man who in the classroom aspired no higher than to mediocrity and frequently fell well short of the mark. I was precisely the kind of student whom today, as a teacher, I should view as obviously hopeless. Lest this seem false humility of a retrospective kind, an attempt to display a phony set of Before and After photographs, let me hasten to add that, were I forced to return to school as a student now, I am reasonably confident that I would still be a bad student; and this for reasons I am not altogether clear about but shall nonetheless attempt to discover.

The question of what it is that makes for a good or a bad student never occurred to me quite so vividly as it did five or six years ago, when I served on a committee for student awards at the university where I teach. As a member of this committee, I read the classroom essays of an English major—An English major?, Lionel Trilling joked in his story "Of This Time, Of That Place." In what regiment?—who was a shoo-in candidate for the best junior-year student in the department. These essays were, each one of them, impeccable. Cold A's, every one—not a semicolon out of place, flawlessly typed, perfectly shaped paragraphs led off by tidy topic sentences. Here was a boy who knew his job, who could deliver the goods.

It was only taken together that I found his classroom papers despicable. For a Marxist professor, this boy produced a correctly down-the-line analysis of *Sister Carrie*; for a survey course, he wrote a tribute to Benjamin Franklin as a hero of the American way of pragmatism and capitalist good sense; for a Freudian-minded teacher of nineteenth-century fiction, he discovered unresolved complexes and sexual tensions in *David Copperfield*. (Had he taken one of my courses, doubtless he would have played for me whatever intellectual music it is I wish to hear.) To each of his teachers he gave what he or she asked for—no less and a little bit more. As I read these essays en bloc, I grew first to feel uncomfortable about, then to dislike, finally actively to despise this young man, whom I thought of as an academic stock boy happily filling orders. He went on the following year to graduate with all possible honors. I hope I may be forgiven when I say that I do not wish him any too well. Like others who have chosen early in life to go with the flow, may he one day before too long be made to taste a little lava.

I was not a bad student in the way in which I think of this young man, who combined real intellectual gifts with real sycophancy, as a bad student. I did not give my teachers what they wanted; and I was distinctly not a sycophant, for the sound reason that I hadn't the basic skills to mount anything like a decent campaign to please my teachers. I was a bad student in the fundamental sense of being an inept student. Although I believe I was mildly precocious as a very young child—I could print my name before I went to school and my father gave me columns of numbers that I added up with alacrity and joy—once I hit the classroom my brain all but ceased functioning. I was not a discipline problem, I had no learning disabilities, but I was absolutely, even profoundly mediocre. Almost all the things one was called upon to do in the early grades, I could not do. I could not draw, and my coloring with crayons always strayed outside the lines; I sang badly off key; and my printing and early handwriting looked like the work of an incipient psychopath. I did not use scissors well, I could not draw a straight line, I made my inkwells look as if they were Oklahoma gushers that had just come in, and with paste I was simply out of control. In later grades I brought something like the same impressive ineptitude to making outlines, diagramming sentences, assembling one or another kind of notebook. I remember especially those notebooks in which a student pasted down and catalogued the various kinds of leaves—you're non-deciduous now, so whaddaya gonna do?—easily marking the nadir of my grade-school productions; it was at least four or five full cuts down from disgraceful.

I used to say that I had too happy a childhood ever to bother learning grammar. But it would be more accurate to say that I did not

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learn anything that I found uninteresting. This might put me in the same category as George Santayana, who, reflecting on his years at the Boston Latin School, remarked that "I have always been recalcitrant about studying what doesn't interest me." One of the many differences between Santayana and me, however, is that almost nothing interested me, with the possible exception of spelling. I was all right at spelling, chiefly, I believe, because it was competitive, or at any rate competitively taught through the exercises known as spelldowns, from which I, for some reason, didn't wish to be too soon eliminated. I hope no one reading this will think that, had my teachers taken more "creative" approaches to learning, I would have been a better student, for I am convinced that I would have been even worse. Thinking back on my own early days of schooling, I realize that I reacted to only two stimuli, fear and competition, and when both were absent, so, mentally, was I.

As for competition, in my case it was highly selective. I rarely competed when I didn't have a decent chance of, if not winning, at least finishing respectably. I very early knew that I could not compete with the bright kids in my class who had a special aptitude for science, so by the time I was, say, ten or eleven, all science became uninteresting to me. So it went with other subjects. A few of my classmates had only to show strong aptitudes for me to show a countervailingly strong apathy. This, combined with my ability to take my pleasure in life from being a fair playground athlete and a more than fair general screw-off, left me a perfectly mediocre student—one of those children who merely gets by. If I was in any way in doubt about my own mediocrity as a student, I had it confirmed for me when, before going off to high school, I learned that I was not recommended to take Latin, as even the minimally bright students were.

Having myself been such a poor student, I naturally adore stories about geniuses who were judged to have been either poor or indifferent students in their day—in the way, I suppose, that failed writers take special delight in learning about classic works that were sorely neglected in their day. The most famous such story is about Albert Einstein's difficulties with mathematics in secondary school, though there is reason to believe that this may be a myth. But it is not mythical that St. Thomas Aquinas when a student was known as "the dumb ox." In the classroom, Henry James was no great shakes. Theodore Dreiser made a rather poor showing in his single year at Indiana University. The physicist and philosopher Ernst Mach was deemed by his teachers to be utterly without talent, and they suggested that he be apprenticed to a cabinet-maker. (I blithely pass by all those geniuses who were splendid students right out of the starting gate.) Yet my guess is that all these men I have named probably failed to do well in school because they were dreamy, or unorthodox, or ran their trains of thought along different, wider-gauged, more far-reaching tracks than conventional teaching could accommodate.

Along with distinctly not being a genius, I was not dreamy, or unorthodox, or anything other than prodigiously uninterested. I went to a high school with lots of bright kids, but with no intellectual traditions. Anti-intellectual traditions ran much stronger. What are now called "street smarts" were greatly valued, but if there was wisdom in the world, surely no one in his right mind at my high school expected to find it in the words of teachers or in books. "In my school crowd, insofar as I had one," Mary McCarthy has recently recounted of her high-school days, "nobody read." If anyone in my school crowd read, he kept it a secret. I had read the sports stories of John R. Tunis in grade school. I must have been assigned the dreary little project known as "book reports" in high-school English, but I evidently gave mine from Classic Comics, the comic book versions of great works of literature. Many years later, in New York, I met a free-lance writer down on his luck who had actually written some of the scripts for Classic Comics. Acknowledging his important contribution to my education, I thanked him warmly.

Over the course of four years in high school, I have no recollection of doing any homework, with the exception of preparation for geometry. Here, I must report, fear operated. I quickly realized that I could not fake or finagle my way through this subject as I could—in fact, did—through every other. Besides, I happened to like geometry, the intellectual order and clarity of it; I also rather

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enjoyed manipulating theorems and axioms, and being able to close an argument with one of Euclid's rhythmic punch lines: "The angle of the dangle equals the flip of the zip," or "If the square of the hypotenuse equals the longest side, then the giraffe emits a laugh." The point I would underscore, however, is that, liking geometry and working at it, I nonetheless received for my efforts a *C*.

One of the fine shiny sociological clichés of our day is contained in the phrase "peer pressure." It might be mildly comforting to me to think that I did so poorly in school owing to peer pressure. Yet I cannot remember feeling any such pressure; it is far more likely that I was one of those peers who put the pressure on other kids. I recall the rather light-hearted contempt with which my friends and I viewed the category of students we referred to as "science bores." These were students who took an earnest interest in such subjects as math, physics, and chemistry (as opposed to my own circle's interest in gin rummy, blackjack, and poker), and who were usually identified by a uniform that consisted of thickish spectacles, rumpled cotton-flannel shirts, unmanageable curly hair, and a light coat of acne. I used to believe that there were no good teachers at my high school, but then it occurred to me that if a teacher was thought to be good—which meant serious and demanding—I steered clear of him. I remember a teacher of chemistry named Dr. Davidson, one of those gallant pedagogues with a Ph.D. who preferred to teach in the trenches of a city public high school. He was dark, with a receding hairline, a perpetually furrowed brow, and rimless glasses. He taught and walked the corridors in a white lab coat and, with every gesture, radiated an air of high intellectual purpose. I would just as soon have taken Dr. Davidson's chemistry course then as I would enter myself in a backwards naked marathon now.

I was able to get through what was then called "the general course" in high school without learning a thing—apart from the instruction available in the air provided by Dr. O. S. Mosis—and yet without ever actually failing a single subject. Lest anyone misread this as a chronicle of misgiving, let me hasten to add that during this time I enjoyed myself hugely, while devoting my days to the extracurricular and my nights to the para-curricular. I was able to achieve this through the application of mother wit and the careful selection of the weakest courses taught by the poorest teachers.

My parents had a respect for education but, not having gone to college themselves, they had very little interest in schooling. When I would bring home my invariably dismal report cards—a couple of *C*'s, a *D*, a rare *B*, a more frequent *A* in gym—my father would read it, recite a little homily to me about trying harder to do my best, sign it, and let it go at that. I gather that my parents must have concluded that their eldest son's talents, if he had any at all, lay outside the classroom. I am grateful to them for this, especially today when, as a teacher, I regularly encounter students who work under the extreme pressure of parents who have grandiose educational plans for them and who have not been able to conceal their disappointment that their child did not get admitted to Harvard or Yale, Princeton or Brown. (What, I have long wondered, was Brown's first name? Somehow I have the feeling that it wasn't Irving.) If you are looking for a big tax write-off under medical expenses (therapy chiefly), my advice is that you get behind your children and push them really hard to get into the very best universities.

Far from being pushed, I decided quite on my own to go to college. (After about the age of ten, it occurs to me, I made all the educational decisions in my life.) If I had chosen not to go to college but instead directly to work, no one would have been in the least surprised and no one certainly would have been aggrieved. To give my mediocrity a numeric character, I graduated 152 in a class of 211. Today it would be difficult to find a respectable college for a student who had done so poorly—finishing just above the lowest quarter of his class. But in the middle fifties, if you were a resident of the state, the University of Illinois had to accept you as a student, with the single proviso that students who finished in the bottom quarter of their high-school graduating classes were accepted on probation. This can be a bit tricky to explain to the young, but college then was at once more casual and more serious than it is now. Getting in was not so difficult—I never, for example, had to take the College Board Examinations, as I believe the SAT's were then

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called—but flunking out was much easier. Nowadays the reverse seems to be the case. A friend who has taught at Harvard in recent years remarked to me that, by and large, students at Harvard did not seem to him all that interested in what goes on in classrooms there. "After all," he said, "what is likely to be the greatest achievement in most of their lives has already taken place—this is that they have been admitted to Harvard."

In England, in France, in Germany, a boy who had done as poorly as I in secondary school would have been scrubbed, washed up, finished. In education, however, America is the land of the second chance, a condition of which I, for reasons not entirely impersonal, vastly approve. My own experience has left me a half-hearted elitist—someone who feels that everything possible should be done to single out, encourage, and promote true talent, yet who also knows that talent has a way of sometimes not showing up on schedule. In *Out of Step*, his soon-to-be-published autobiography, the philosopher Sidney Hook reveals himself to have been a rebellious high-school student of the wise-guy type; I recently read, in a collection of his letters, that the widely talented poet and painter Weldon Kees never received other than mediocre grades in school. Doubtless hundreds of other names of talented men and women could be adduced who performed poorly in school, and out of this list a National Dishonor Society could be formed, though where exactly the dishonor ought to fall—on the students for not working very hard, or on their teachers for not contriving to get the best of them—is by no means clear. My own rather jaded view is that no matter how efficient and finely meshed an educational system one devises, many children will slip through it and some among them will be the (secretly) talented. A few may scarcely need any schooling at all. "The only school Beethoven attended, and then only for a short time," reports J. W. N. Sullivan in his study of the composer's spiritual development, "was a lower grade public school in Bonn called the Tirocinium."

I blush to speak of the talented, even the secretly talented, for if I had any talent at eighteen, when I went off to the state university that by law was compelled to accept me, it was certainly a secret to me. I had, however, a very keen sense of the talents that I did *not* possess. Most of the friends with whom I went off to the University of Illinois were majoring in business, a subject that I, too, should no doubt have majored in, if only because, in the context of the rather philistine middle-class culture in which I grew up, business sounded so splendidly purposeful. But to major in business meant one had to take several courses in accounting, and I knew, in the nuclei of the cells of the marrow of my smallest bones, that with my handwriting, my penchant for disorder, my unearned disdain for clerical detail, I could turn enrollment in an introductory accounting course into a Venetian tragedy. Out of fear of accounting, then, I chose to study something called "liberal arts," a phrase I heard for the first time only after I had arrived on the campus of the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana.

If fear of accounting sent me into the liberal arts, fear of flunking out of college kept me studying them, I will not say with intelligence but with ferocious energy. I was less than handsomely equipped for the task of staying in school: I had an unsure grasp of English grammar, knowledge of no foreign language beyond the level of *el burro es un animal importante*, a mind unclogged with even the rudiments of general science, a storehouse of historical fact learned exclusively at the movies, and no study habits whatsoever. My approach to college study was quite simple—I merely memorized everything set before me. Biological taxonomy, French verbs, seventeenth-century English sonnets—hey, as they say nowadays, no problem, I memorized them all. In a composition course then somewhat grandly entitled Rhetoric, I learned that I had a very small knack for writing, a knack I didn't overstrain by doing anything fancy; and anything fancy included using a semicolon, which looked to me like a combination of a Hebrew vowel and a Chinese ideograph and which I wouldn't have touched with a ten-foot dash. Fear of humiliation goading me on all the way, I was able to achieve something like a *B* average at the close of my first semester.

Out of the Crockpot into the Cuisinart, I transferred a year later to the University of Chicago, which must have been rather hard up for undergraduates if it accepted me, though I am very grateful that it did. Graduate students greatly outnumbered undergraduates at the University of Chicago, and the

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school's graduate students set the tone for the place, which was bohemian, slightly neurotic, and very serious. What made the University of Chicago seem especially impressive, at least to my untrained eyes, were the Europeans on its faculty, refugees from Hitler's depredations in Europe. The undergraduates I encountered were kilometers ahead of me intellectually; the representative undergraduate struck me then as being someone from New York who had been reading the *New Republic* from the age of eleven and decided against going to an Ivy League school because they were all deemed too lightweight. Some among them possessed what seemed to me startlingly arcane information about history, early music, philosophy, politics. Once, in a poetry class taught by Elder Olson, Olson began chanting, quite beautifully and in French, a poem by Baudelaire. He was presently joined in his chant by the student sitting next to me, whose name was Martha Silverman, who also had the poem by heart and in French. Sensing more vividly than ever before how much over my head I was, I felt a strong wave of utter hopelessness wash over me. Oh, Martha, what has become of you since that brilliant performance on that dark morning in Elder Olson's classroom? Did you, I wonder, peak at that very moment, to fall thenceforth gently into decline?

I had become more earnest as a student, but I was clearly in the camp of the drones. Even among drones I was a drone. In three years at the University of Chicago I do not believe I ever said anything in a classroom that advanced the discussion in any useful way. On the rare occasions when I spoke at all, usually after being called upon to do so, no teacher ever capped my comments by saying, "A point well taken," or "That is nicely formulated," or "Good, but can you say a little more?" or even "Interesting." The only time I ever knew an answer that no one else in the room knew was when, in a course on the novel, Morton Dauwen Zabel asked if anyone knew what other famous book besides *Madame Bovary* was then—it was 1957—in its centenary year. I happened to have read somewhere, perhaps in the News Notes of *Poetry*, that 1957 was the centenary of *Les Fleurs du mal*. I raised my hand, decided not to risk the French, and when called upon said, "Charles Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*." "Correct," said Zabel. "Thank you." I felt flush, as if I had just won the lottery.

On the few occasions when I attempted to slip free of dronedom, it proved a mistake. In a course on satire, a very nice professor put forth his theory of satire, which I thought half-baked, and I criticized it in a term paper in which I put forth a completely raw theory of my own. The result was a charitable *C*. In a course in Greek history, I was asked to do an essay on why Philip of Macedon chose Aristotle for his son Alexander's tutor. Cutting through a good deal of historico-political claptrap, I said it was really quite simple: Philip, being no dope, wanted the best possible teacher for his son, and there was none better than Aristotle in the whole of the Peloponnesus. Another icy *C*, this time accompanied by the gentle remonstrance that I should try to control a tendency toward glibness. The evidence was beginning to weigh in: as a drone, I was a *B* student; as an original thinker, I was a *C*.

I should have been delighted if, when I was young, some teacher had taken me aside and said, or in his behavior implied, "There is something special in you, and I want to help you develop it." None ever did. But, then, it occurs to me to add, there wasn't anything special in me. I was a rough without a diamond in it. It would be convenient for me now to say of myself that I was obviously a late developer; that, at any rate, is the conventional category in which my intellectual autobiography would seem to fit. But I do not truly think I am a late developer. (I began publishing in magazines, somewhat precociously, in my early twenties.) I think instead that I am someone who has never been able to profit much from the kind of education that is available in classrooms and lecture halls. I may be, in the strict schoolroom sense of the term, ineducable.

Not that I was entirely impervious to my teachers, but such influence as they exerted upon me was, in the main, stylistic. Watching a lecture delivered in the grand European manner, or a social scientist unsentimentally dissecting a serious subject, or an art historian passionately conveying his love for Guido Reni—all this was very exciting to me, yet the problem may have been that I *watched* it so intently that I never quite *heard* what they were saying. Observing my professors

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seemed so much more interesting than actually listening to them.

Had I gone on to graduate school, which I never for a moment contemplated doing, I might have fallen under the sway of some powerful teacher and become, say, a Straussian, or Wintersian, or Leavisite. Yet I rather doubt it. I was plenty ignorant, but I wasn't gullible. I had a strong father at home and wasn't looking for one away from home. I also had a street-learned skepticism, and I believed with Santayana (whom I hadn't yet read) that "skepticism is the chastity of the intellect, and it is shameful to surrender it too soon or to the first comer. . . ." In any case, I think I should have bridled under too firm an intellectual influence. One of the things that college taught me was that I cannot be taught in the conventional manner. Autodidactically, I have to go about things in my own pokey way, obliquely acquiring on my own such intellectual skills as I have, assembling such learning as I possess from my odd, unsystematic reading. Are there many such people as I? The inefficacy of teaching in his own life, if I may say so, is an unusual thing to have to admit on the part of a man who himself spends a good part of his own time teaching others. But there it is—or, rather, there I am.

As a former poor student who is now a teacher, I study good students rather as Malinowski did the Trobriand Islanders—as an outsider, someone, that is, who is distinctly not one of them. I am tempted to steal a formulation from Tolstoy and say that all good students are alike while every bad student is bad in his own way, except that I don't quite believe it is so. My quotation in the previous paragraph from Santayana reminds me that one of Santayana's best students was Walter Lippmann, whom he asked to stay on to be his assistant at Harvard, though that young man had other ideas about his career. Traditionally, good students at Harvard have been thought to have a certain intellectual sophistication and suavity without being very deep, whereas good students at the University of Chicago have been thought to be deep but without much in the way of intellectual sophistication or suavity. Owing perhaps to such go-getter alumni as Henry Luce, William Benton, and Chester Bowles, one tends to think of good students at Yale as training themselves for success in the world, while at Princeton the social question—that is to say, snobbery—still seems uppermost, though this may be a hangover from F. Scott Fitzgerald days (Fitzgerald was himself a very poor student, and so was another famous Princetonian named Adlai Stevenson). Good students at St. John's in Annapolis seem almost too earnest—the good life is all very well, but leading it surely cannot entail talking about it so much, as all "great books" education seems to require of its students. But good students have a way of popping up in odd places; and, besides, it is probably more sensible today to refer not to good schools—viewed close up, no contemporary school seems very good—but instead to schools that are difficult to get into.

Still, I remain astonished at the sheer proficiency of certain students. When I was myself a student, I was much impressed with the type of good student known as "the quick study." The girl-friend of a friend of mine at the University of Chicago, who did not appear to be more than mildly interested in intellectual things, seemed unable to score poorly on an examination or to write an unsuccessful paper. One felt about Dottie that she could write a *B+* paper on John Stuart Mill while sitting under a tree during a monsoon, or score an *A−* on a mathematics exam administered to her during a car crash. At the school where I teach, I have come across a number of students with the happy knack of knocking out term papers that quite simply cannot be given less than an *A*. These students are like beautifully trained retrievers: "T. S. Eliot and Catholicism"—OK, girl, fetch! "Dostoyevsky's Politics"—C'mon, boy, go get it! And they do: efficiently, tidily, sometimes quite brilliantly. Often behind what I have called "the happy knack"—my old tendency toward glibness is still intact, I see—is a great deal of effort; and careful writing is, after all, the best evidence going for having an orderly and lucid mind. And yet the superior writers among my students are often merely those students who best sense what is wanted of them and, through skills they have developed over the years, are able to deliver it. I am generally delighted, in the locution of the car dealers, "to take delivery." Still, in my intellectual greed, I hope that my best students will be more than merely good at school.

Everyone who teaches must at some point

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ask himself what he wants from his students. If one is teaching a science, or a foreign language, or the skills required for such vocations as law or journalism, the answer ought to be clear—one wants one's students to master the material in the course. But in the teaching of literature, which is what I teach, I don't believe the materials are quite masterable; I have no notion how one masters Henry James or Joseph Conrad. Far from having mastered the materials I teach, I frequently find that, from semester to semester, I cannot even remember them myself, and so have to reread five- and six-hundred-page novels. It would be foolish to expect one's students to be better at this than one is oneself.

In my case the matter is complicated by the fact that, so far as I know, I teach no strict doctrine, no clear method; I have no architectonic ideas, or even any very tonic ones. I try to make sense of literary works, convey my appreciation for their subtlety and power and beauty, and make plain their significance. If my teaching has a central message, it is probably the intellectual equivalent of "Don't accept any wooden nickels." (Usually these intellectual wooden nickels have "isms" attached to them.) All this being so, my ideal student is one who has that intolerance for nonsense otherwise known as skepticism. But his must be skepticism of a certain kind—skepticism reinforced by seriousness. By seriousness I mean the understanding that art and ideas have real consequences—consequences over the long haul as great and sometimes greater than those of politics and technology—that life is at once a gift and a puzzle, and that the attempt to make the most of this life through coming to an understanding of the puzzle is not the only game in town but surely the most important one. Of course, in the young such seriousness is almost always inchoate, but it does from time to time turn up, and when it does it is immensely impressive and makes merely being good at school—you will pardon the expression—academic.

As a teacher who was not himself good at school, I have a special sympathy for students who do not perform well in class. I rather prize *C* students—were my younger self to walk into one of my current courses, he would doubtless get a *C*, perhaps a *C*+—for in the current day of grade inflation, to be able to give a student a *C* helps convince a teacher that he still has high standards. When I sense a student's nervousness, my own nervousness as a student comes back to me. In a sense, I still am a poor student, or at least have the psychology of a poor student. When an undergraduate, I would occasionally have what I think of as student nightmares: these usually involved my having to take an exam in some branch of higher mathematics or some language, such as Persian, for which I was wholly unprepared. Now, generally near the beginning of a new term, I can count on a teaching nightmare: these usually involve my having lost my notes before a lecture, or being unable to find the room in which I am to teach, or knowing nothing whatever about the subject in which I am to instruct others. Today, even awake, when giving an examination, I feel a slight shudder of terror pass over me—terror and relief at not having to take another college examination myself.

A few years after I began teaching, it occurred to me that being a teacher—not being a student—provides the best education. "To teach is to learn twice," wrote Joubert, in a simple-sounding maxim that could have several different meanings. It could mean that one first learns when getting up the material is about to teach and then tests and relearns it in the actual teaching. It could mean that being a teacher offers one a fine chance for a second draft on one's inevitably inadequate initial education. It could mean that learning, like certain kinds of love, is better the second time around. It could mean that we are not ready for education, at any rate of the kind that leads on to wisdom, until we are sixty, or seventy, or beyond. I favor this last interpretation, for it accounts for the strange feeling that I have had every year of my adult life, which is that only twelve months ago I was really quite stupid.

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Science and Scientists in the Public Arena

EDWARD SHILS

SCIENTISTS HAVE BECOME part of the political public in a way in which they have never been before. Although in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there were scientists who left science to become professional politicians, and although there were scientists who became organizers of scientific institutions and scientists who made representations on behalf of science before politicians, civil servants, and the larger public, and there were many who worked quietly as scientists in governmental and industrial research institutions, political issues did not arouse scientists in the way that they do now. They did not press upon them through the invasive presence of the environing society. They did not take such a hold on their sentiments and their moral imagination. Fifty years ago, when I first became interested in these problems, no one, not even H. G. Wells and certainly not I, could have predicted what has since happened.

I shall begin on an autobiographical note. From the early autumn of 1945, I was drawn into close relations with "the movement of atomic scientists." It happened because at the end of August of that year, Leo Szilard, the Hungarian-born physicist whose research had contributed to building the first sustained nuclear chain reaction and who was instrumental in initiating the Manhattan Project for the development of the atomic bomb, had heard that I was trying to work out a scheme to prevent the production of atomic bombs by any country. (It was a very harebrained scheme.) He presented himself to me, probably with a view to examining my seriousness and my capacity for imagination and my fitness for collaboration with him in his political schemes and campaigns. As a result of our conversations, we, with the support of Robert Hutchins, organized a conference at the University of Chicago on the atomic bomb and world peace. It was held in the last week of September 1945. Among those who participated were Harold Urey, Farrington

EDWARD SHILS, professor of sociology and social thought at the University of Chicago and honorary fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge, is the editor of *Minerva: A Review of Science, Learning, and Policy.*

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Daniels, Joyce Stearns, Irving Langmuir, Thorfin Hogness, Reuben Gustafson, and Szilard himself. Since our aim was to enlist the counsel and support of persons experienced in the public realm, we invited David Lilienthal, Beardsley Ruml, Chester Barnard, Jacob Viner, Jacob Marschak, Charles Lindbergh, Bernard Brodie, and about fifteen others whose names I do not recall. Szilard proposed the scientists; I proposed the men from the public realm, men of courageous imagination; Hutchins proposed only Lindbergh, who gave an impression of modesty and gentleness and who was silent practically throughout the discussions.

The aim of the conference was to devise a scheme for the "control of the atom." My ingenious scheme to prevent the production of atomic weapons anywhere was shot down at once by Hutchins, that utopian university reformer and promoter of a world constitution, as "too utopian." It undoubtedly was, but, in a more sophisticated and far more judicious form, it appeared later in the Acheson-Lilienthal report, which in turn became the seed of the Baruch plan to abolish existing atomic weapons and to prevent the further production of them. Jacob Viner, in his time one of the most distinguished economists and a man who combined eminence as a theorist of international trade and as a historian of international politics with hardheaded realism and a readiness to speak his mind, was the wisest of all the participants. He said that the atomic bomb would only be an additional factor in the balance of power. National states and their rivalries would continue; the atomic bomb would not fundamentally change the relations of states. He had no time for the utopian views that were always near the surface of the discussions at the conference.

As a result of my association with Szilard and my role in this first conference, the scientists' movement turned to me to supply it with the knowledge that the natural scientists who made it up thought that I, as a social scientist, must possess. Of course, I had no social scientific knowledge of any value for their vague and virtuous aspirations, but I was ready to help them with such native wit, common sense, knowledge of miscellaneous historical and sociological studies, and the fairly good understanding of the history of the Soviet Union and the Communist International as I possessed. I think that I gained more than I gave in my association with that small group of remarkable men—mostly quite young—of extraordinary purity of spirit.

The movement grew out of Szilard's agitation within the Metallurgy Project (that section of the Manhattan Project located on the campus of the University of Chicago) during the latter part of the war. James Franck and Harold Urey were its presiding genii as it emerged from the secrecy of the Project into the public after August 8, 1945. Szilard had no

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patience with anything that he himself had instigated—once it was in existence—and so had very fitful relations with the "movement."

Although its young members had been inspired by the moral urgency of Szilard's apprehensions, which he had expressed within the secret confines of the Project, his contacts with its members, once the war was over, were largely over a cup of coffee or tea at Stineway's Drugstore on 57th Street, close by the university. The movement itself consisted largely of the activities and worried mood of John Simpson, David Hill, Austin Brues, Robert Wilson, Francis Freedman, Alexander Langsdorf, Hyman Goldsmith, Eugene Rabinowitch, and a few others. After a time, Goldsmith and Rabinowitch separated themselves somewhat from the activities of the others. The others had their minds on Washington, to which they went on numerous occasions, seeking and being sought out by senators, congressmen, and, less often, high civil servants. Goldsmith and Rabinowitch found a printer in South Chicago and, with my assistance, brought out the first issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* around the beginning of 1946.

In view of the attention this group drew throughout the country and from abroad, it is necessary to point out that the circle around the University of Chicago was very small. It had scheduled evening meetings in dusty classrooms, attended by ten or fifteen young scientists, and there were impromptu encounters in Stineway's Drugstore, especially with James Franck, and snatches of conversation with Szilard wherever he happened to be at the moment—which might be on the street or at the dining room of the university faculty club or the common room of the Social Science Research Building. Through Robert Redfield, the dean of the social sciences, who inclined toward an apocalyptic moralism, the *Bulletin* acquired a gloomy room in the basement of the Social Science Research Building originally intended, and perhaps still used at that time, to store questionnaires and the miscellaneous detritus of the paltry social research of those days; members of the circle sometimes met each other there. There were also groups in Los Alamos, Brookhaven, and Oak Ridge. In the first months, they occasionally produced a mimeographed bulletin of a few pages. The other groups were skimpy things, compared with the Chicago movement, which was itself skimpy enough.

The movement of atomic scientists was a Potemkin village of movements. The relatively large facade hid the very small reality behind it. Yet the small number of active persons caught public attention by their desperate honesty. It was a political movement because it wished to influence political decisions. Except for Urey, whose signature had been sought by fellow travelers at Columbia before the war, Szilard, who had always had an acute and eccentric interest in political turbulence, and Rabinowitch, a refugee from the October Revolution, none of the

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members of the movement in Chicago had been interested in or active in politics before the war. Some of them had been schoolboys at that time; the older ones, as was common among academics outside the social sciences before the war, had been indifferent to politics. Their knowledge of American government and of world politics was extremely faint.

Not long ago, a colleague of mine who regards everyone except himself as soft on Communists asked me accusingly whether the scientists' movement had been a movement of fellow travelers. Nothing could have been less true than the answer that he wanted to hear. The truthful answer was that they were neither fellow travelers nor traditional American collectivistic liberals. In fact they were as apolitical as anyone who later engaged in politics could have been. Philip Morrison and Robert Oppenheimer at Los Alamos were exceptions; but Oppenheimer was a shadowy and unreliable figure in the movement and Morrison was not at the center, and neither had been on the Metallurgy Project in Chicago. The members of the movement in Chicago, except for Rabinowitch, were ignorant of the history of Bolshevism; they had scarcely heard of the Moscow Trials; they knew nothing of the Communist party of the United States. They had been ignorant, politically indifferent patriots. They had unquestioningly done their patriotic duty during the war. The destructive powers of the bomb had disturbed them greatly, and they were desperate to find a solution that would exclude its use ever again. They knew at the very least that there could be no international control without the agreement of the Soviet Union. They had no strong views about the Soviet Union; they knew practically nothing of its history or politics.

They did not regard it as impossible that the Soviet Union would agree with their views on the international control of nuclear weapons. They regarded it as their task to persuade the government of the United States and the American people to agree to a scheme of control; if that could be done, they saw no reason why the Soviet Union would refuse. Rabinowitch, who was the best informed, the most sophisticated, and the most aware of the realities of the Soviet Union, and hence a little—perhaps more than a little—distrustful of the Soviet Union, was confident that scientific arguments would be decisive. He was an adherent of the naive idea that scientists have "the future in their bones," well before C. P. Snow made himself famous by using that phrase in his Godkin lectures about a decade and a half later. Rabinowitch, unlike his associates, knew a lot about the Soviet Union, but he inclined to the view that its resistance to international control would be set aside once the views of scientists were clearly put before it. Rabinowitch had faith in the wisdom that the scientific method instilled into scientists. This was the reason why Rabinowitch welcomed the Pugwash meetings, with the

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prospect they held out of Soviet and American scientists engaging in rational, unpolitical discussions with each other. It was inevitable in his view that the Soviet scientists would be as disinterested and as free of national parochiality as the American scientists were. Such meetings appeared to him to offer the best chance for international control.

After their disappointment at the Soviet rejection of the Baruch proposal and the diversion of the scientists' movement into the empty success of obtaining the enactment of the MacMahon Act, which appeared to guarantee civilian rather than military administration of atomic energy, the movement was distracted by McCarthy's (and kindred) harassment of scientists and the dismissal of Oppenheimer from the general advisory council of the Atomic Energy Commission. The succession of disclosures of Soviet espionage in the atomic bomb projects—Nunn-May, Pontecorvo, Fuchs, and the Rosenbergs—also had a discouraging effect on those who had hoped for international control. By the early 1950s, the movement was dwindling away. It became inert, except for the regular appearance of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, which was the work of a handful of persons. The *Bulletin* itself approached the verge of extinction in 1952. It was saved only by the burst of attention and then financial support that followed what was to have been its last issue. This was a double issue that I edited on the refusals by the United States government to grant visas to foreign scientists who were often frivolously suspected of having been sympathizers with communism.

II

The advent of the Pugwash meetings re-animated and transformed the political attitudes of the small number of scientists who had become preoccupied by the existence of nuclear weapons. It introduced conversations between scientists of the West and the Soviet Union. Szilard's endless ingenuity impressed Cyrus Eaton, a naive and wealthy industrialist whose vanity made him eager to fill the great role that was accorded to him as the patron of the Pugwash movement. The Pugwash committee in effect replaced the barely living Federation of American Scientists. It restored confidence in the ability of scientists to bring about agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States to control nuclear weapons. The agreement to refrain from tests of nuclear weapons, except underground, had an encouraging effect on the American participants in the Pugwash meetings. But instead of providing a forum for detached rational discussion such as Rabinowitch had thought would persuade the Soviet and American elites, Pugwash introduced an element of conciliatory "realism." The scientists of the Communist coun-

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tries were invariably and self-righteously on the side of "peace" and the Western scientists, in order to get on with them, had also to be in favor of "peace," as understood by the Soviet scientists and their accompanists from the "camp of peace and democracy."

The absolute abolition of nuclear weapons was abandoned; "arms control" accepted the continued existence of nuclear weapons. I am not sure how much realism there was in this unannounced change and how much of it was a concession to the self-righteous scientists from the Soviet Union and the "people's republics," who proclaimed their love of peace and who had no criticisms of the large stocks of nuclear weapons manufactured by the Soviet Union.

The hearings on Oppenheimer's membership in the general advisory council of the United States Atomic Energy Commission, which ended in his exclusion, gave a subtle but powerful push to the withdrawal of confidence of American scientists from their government. They engendered an imperceptible but real pressure among the scientists who participated in the Pugwash conference to give the benefit of every doubt to the Soviet Union and a parallel tendency to refuse the benefit of any doubt to the United States. The success of the Kennedy administration in the conclusion of the Nuclear Test Ban had aroused the enthusiasm of the scientists for the realism practiced at Pugwash; the dramatic end of the Kennedy administration gradually removed from the United States government those scientists who had become associated with Pugwash and precipitated them into the opposition.

The decision to produce the hydrogen bomb, the accumulation of animosity toward Edward Teller, who was regarded as responsible for Oppenheimer's humiliation, and the widespread support for Oppenheimer in his degradation have sometimes been invoked to explain the distrust of some of the leading scientists of the United States toward their government. But this distrust was of earlier origin. It had its sources in several experiences and in a tradition with which scientists had originally little to do. One of these sources was the disagreeable experience of "compartmentalization"—i.e., the arrangement whereby scientists in the various sections of the Manhattan Project were prohibited from communicating with each other about their work, unless officially authorized to do so. Official authorization was in the hands of security officers, who were mainly army officers. This restriction on the freedom to discuss scientific matters with whomever they wished had left an unpleasant memory in the minds of the scientists.

Another source of distrust was the uproar about the need to keep "the secret." It had been intimated by journalists and politicians, sometimes explicitly, that if "the secret" were kept from the Soviets, the Soviet Union could not advance in the production of nuclear weapons. The

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proponents of "the secret" were well aware that the scientists had bridled at compartmentalization and that they denied the possibility of preventing the Soviet Union from producing atomic weapons by withholding knowledge from them. This appeared to the defenders of "the secret" as tantamount to a readiness to disclose secret information to the Soviet Union. In fact, however, what the scientists said was that nature was always open to skillful scientists, regardless of their nationality, and that there was nothing one country could do to prevent the scientists of another country from rediscovering the fundamental truths already discovered by other scientists. In their arguments, they sometimes appeared to their unimaginative and unsophisticated adversaries to be arguing against the desirability or permissibility of military secrecy. Perhaps they were careless in the way in which they put their arguments.

Excitable and ill-informed persons suggested that scientists could not be trusted to respect the obligation of secrecy. The McCarthyite agitation was not just about "Communists in government"; it was also about "secrecy." This coincided with the reports of the Canadian and Australian investigations into Soviet espionage and the disclosure that there had been a number of Soviet spies in the American atomic bomb project during the war. None of those spies was an American scientist, but that did not stop vulgar journalists and demagogic politicians from hinting that scientists were not "reliable." American scientists regarded themselves as being under attack; Oppenheimer's misfortunes were for them part of a coherent picture.

In point of fact, very few American scientists had been fellow travelers before the war. Robert Oppenheimer, Harlow Shapley, the eminent Harvard astronomer, probably H. J. Muller, the distinguished geneticist of Indiana University, were among this very small group. Probably even fewer had been Communists; Dirk Struik, the Dutch-American mathematician at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was perhaps the only one with any reputation in scientific circles. Oppenheimer was the only quondam fellow traveler among the many outstanding scientists on the Manhattan Project; some of the younger scientists on the Project had moved in such circles at Berkeley and in New York just before the war at the height of fellow traveling, but there is no evidence that they had infringed on the regulations governing security. American scientists were innocents in politics, but they were also innocent of inclinations toward the treasonous disclosure of secrets.

Nevertheless, the scientists' argument about the impossibility of indefinitely preventing, through a policy of secrecy, the acquisition of knowledge by another, inimical country, certainly corresponded to their convictions. Secrecy is in principle abhorrent to scientists, and it is also

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abhorrent in practice—at least most of the time. Governmentally required secrecy in scientific matters is especially abhorrent to them, and particularly is it so among those who do what they regard as "fundamental science" and who regard themselves as belonging to the elite of pure scientists committed above all else to truth.

The intellectual traditions that scientists encountered when they began to interest themselves in public matters had previously been unknown to them. Among American literary intellectuals, there had long been a tradition of distrust of all politicians of the major political parties and of bourgeois society in general, but this tradition largely lay beyond the experiences of most American scientists.

American scientists, both those in universities and those outside them, had been quite unaffected by this tradition before the Second World War. There had been only a very small number who had broader interests in society, and those who did have such interests shared in the progressivistic, optimistic scientism of their time; they thought that science would continue, even more than in the past, to contribute to the improvement of the lot of the human race, would strengthen and add to the glory of their respective countries, and in fortunate cases bring fame to themselves. The conditions of Western societies in the Great Depression of the 1930s made a small number of scientists sympathetic with Marxism, socialism, and communism, but this was mainly in France and Great Britain. Practically all scientists in the United States remained aloof from such temptations, apart from the exceptions already mentioned.

The boundaries eroded as the horizons of scientists broadened. The reverberations of nuclear weapons and the revulsion against a possible nuclear war brought the increasingly but still only moderately politicized scientists and literary and publicistic intellectuals more closely into contact with each other, at least at certain points of intersection, such as journals of popular science and in the general sessions of the meetings of scientific associations. Thus, some of the traditional outlook of the intellectual strata who were most critical of American society came to be shared by the politicized scientists. At the same time, it should be pointed out that the efforts made by Stalinist Communists in the United States after the war to draw scientists into their fold were not successful.

In the 1960s and 1970s, nuclear weapons and nuclear energy came in for more widespread and more apprehensive attention than they had received since the second half of the 1940s. The growth of a more protective attitude toward the environment coincided with the development of the nuclear power industry, itself connected with the precipitation of the energy crisis of the 1970s. The unease about the disposal of nuclear waste was expanded by the environmentalist agitation, but it

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was probably also nourished by a deep anxiety about nuclear weapons and the possibility of nuclear war. Arms control became a more common preoccupation, both among scientists and laymen. The very widespread discussions of SALT I and SALT II after the experience of passionate denunciation of the United States government for its conduct of the war in Southeast Asia led uneasy scientists to acquire the radical critical attitude that had become current among American publicists and academics outside the scientific faculties.

The confluence of contemporary experience and inherited traditions has resulted in a new attitude among American scientists. The alarm about environmental damage resulting from the negligent disposal of chemical waste, the contention about the disposal of nuclear waste, the new sensitivity to dangers from pharmaceutical substances, anxiety about the potentialities of molecular biology and the technology based on it, and a deep fear of the destruction of human life by nuclear warfare have generated a tendency toward an "anti-science" attitude in the intellectual classes and more widely. Scientists have not been immune to these currents of opinion.

III

Some scientists, at least in their public statements, have become somewhat ill at ease about science. The proud and unqualified, even arrogant confidence in the value of science and in the benefits that flow from it has become a bit less steady in the ranks of scientists. For the most part, most scientists have withstood these doubts, but an edge of uncertainty has formed around their hitherto firm but inarticulate convictions about the intrinsic and the practical value of scientific knowledge and the scientific research that produces it.

Scientists have felt compelled to admit that the benefits of scientific knowledge are not as unalloyed or as unquestionable as used to be thought; they now recognize that there remain ethical problems that are unsolved and that are in fact engendered by progress in biomedical knowledge and techniques. Weighty decisions now faced by physicians about who should be allowed to die have infused a little uncertainty into the previously unblemished self-confidence of the biologists. The consternation a few years ago of some molecular biologists about the possibility of harmful effects from recombinant DNA was enlarged in the course of its diffusion into the wider body of public opinion; this in turn has had its repercussions among scientists. The uncovering of a small number of cases of scientists who have cheated in reporting the results of their research has been taken up by science writers and exploited to darken the reputation of scientists and the trustworthiness of the results

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of research. Publicists of science—not themselves scientists—have kept up a steady flow of reports about the criticisms of scientists made by non-scientists, so that scientists could not remain unaware that their work does not now enjoy universal approval. Physicists have not been able to avoid a trace of apology for their science ever since the peace-agitation has placed the horror of nuclear warfare more saliently and more continuously in public attention.

Alongside all of this, there has been a steady movement outside of science, mainly by philosophers and sociologists, to derogate the universal validity of science, to reduce it to the status of a "bourgeois ideology," or to a part of culture that is valid only in relation to the prevailing beliefs of its own society and civilization and not outside them. The "strong program" of the sociology of science has joined, or has flown from, a vulgar Marxism that alleges that science is the product of "interests," a servant of the powerful, and without grounds for its claim to universal validity. The objectivity of scientific knowledge has been derided as a vain effort to evade responsibility and a form of cowardly self-protection. It is alleged that evaluative, power-serving, power-exercising motives are inherent in scientific activity.

Yet science, despite these tribulations and distractions, has gone steadily forward. Scientific knowledge has grown. The public prominence and influence of scientists have grown. Expenditures from the public purse have risen beyond recognition compared with expenditures before and immediately after the Second World War. The numbers of scientists have increased with these increased funds and with the similarly increased expenditures on higher education. The governments of practically every country in the world, including many in which science is in a fledgling condition, rest their hopes on science for the improvement of their economic situation and the maintenance or strengthening of their position in the world. Governments and politicians are caught up in the belief in the beneficence of science; even those who have inhaled some of the fumes of distrust of science pumped into the air by publicists, philosophers, and social scientists want the benefits of science.

Even if some scientists had not been drawn into the public sphere in consequence of their worries about the atomic bomb, even if the Pugwash meetings had not served to give currency in some scientific circles to the Soviet conception of "peace," and even if there had been no environmentalist concerns and no fears about the ramifications of molecular biology, scientists would have been thrust into the public arena. Scientists would have been forced into more acute consciousness of the public attitude toward science because of the increased reliance on scientific knowledge by governments and their expectations of it, and

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also because of the dependence of academic scientists on government for the formal support of their research.

The large sums of public funds allocated for the use of scientists in the expectation that diseases would be cured and industry made more competitive internationally have made scientists more sensitive to the world outside science. The recent growth of the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries makes scientists more aware that the world is watching them and waiting on their achievements. The readiness of industrial enterprises to seek the collaboration of scientists in universities has made scientists aware of the opportunities, temptations, and dangers of these great expectations. The dependence of scientific research on the large sums that have to be voted on by popularly elected governments and legislative bodies has focused the minds of scientists on the public arena to an extent that is unprecedented.

Given their tradition of autonomy and their strong desire for autonomy in the choice of their subjects, problems, methods, and interpretations, and given the large expectations of speedy practical results from scientific discoveries, tensions within the minds of individual scientists and in the scientific community were bound to occur. This would have happened even without the unceasing agitation of the broader public opinion about arms control and environmental protection. Scientists are having to struggle to maintain their autonomy in a situation that, if not inimical to, at least threatens to be restrictive of their autonomy. It is not just through the requirements of security or secrecy of scientific results by governments and business firms that the autonomy and openness of science are being jostled and sometimes constricted by the increased prominence of "mission-oriented" research. The large scale of single research projects made possible by the availability of great sums of money, by the large tasks assigned for the "missions," and by the changes in the kinds of instruments nowadays required in many fields of science has brought home to scientists that the freedom they enjoyed when research projects were small and the demands for practical results were less insistent is no longer the natural and inevitable condition of scientific research. The outer world has forced itself into the horizon of scientists as never before.

These profound changes are in part a consequence of the change in the achievements and capacities of science itself—of the great achievements that have made possible the widely ranging application of scientific technology in matters of health, agricultural and industrial production, communication and information, and military policy. It is also a consequence of the change in the outlook of many scientists and of their assimilation into the outlook of non-scientific intellectuals, with their

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readiness for radical denunciation of all that exists within contemporary Western societies, and of their own in particular.

IV

A new collective self-consciousness has settled among scientists. With all the disagreements and with all their specialization, scientists conceive of themselves as a community within and across the boundaries of their respective disciplines, their respective institutions, and their respective national societies. For all these causes, they are now more preoccupied with what is called the responsibility of science. Whereas earlier their sense of responsibility emphasized their responsibility to scientific truth and its protection from the distorting beliefs and even repressive actions of religious institutions, the new sense of responsibility extends to concern about the practical application of their scientific knowledge. They felt no need to worry about these applications in earlier centuries and even in relatively recent times; nowadays they cannot avert their attention from these applications.

Some scientists—still relatively few—joining their voices to those of publicists, philosophers, and social scientists, claim that scientists should control the application of their discoveries and that they should not perform research that will have deleterious social consequences. They argue that scientists should not do research that will serve the interests of the powerful and the wealthy; others go further and say that scientists should instead serve the interests of the people. To control the applications of the results of their research, scientists would have to modify the traditional practice of free publication of their results or they would have to bring about a change in patent laws, which at present do not cover fundamental scientific discoveries. If scientists were to act in accordance with these proposals, they would place themselves in a position in which they would supplant the elected representatives of the electorate and the legally appointed civil servants and businessmen who provide the funds for "mission-oriented research." If scientists were to accept the recommendations of these critics, they would become actively associated with those publicists and politicians who are adamantly critical of the policies of their governments and of the prevailing tendencies of existing institutions intimately linked with the center of society. Only a very small number of scientists are persuaded by these arguments.

If patent laws are not changed, and if the traditions of the open publication of the results of research continue, then, if the recommendations of the critics are to be realized, scientists would have to foresee the consequences of the application of the results of their research, even

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before the results have been attained. Such things cannot be foreseen. It is simply beyond human powers to foresee the consequences of events that have not yet occurred and that themselves cannot be foreseen. Furthermore, it is not reasonable for scientists to believe that they alone have responsibilities in the application of research. To attempt to carry out such responsibilities, scientists would have to have the powers of legislators and civil servants, to act as generals, to do the work of directors and managers of business firms, economists and market research workers, to determine whether the results of a piece of research are safely, practically, and economically applicable and how and whether they should be applied.

Such roles lie beyond the training of scientists, beyond their capacities and the legitimacy of the activities for which they claim and receive the support of society. The realization of the demand that scientists take the responsibility for the application of their discoveries and for the consequence of those applications would create a scientistic theocracy, which is repugnant to the traditions of scientists. It would be antithetical to the liberalism of so many scientists and to the antinomian attitude that some of them now espouse in their public declarations. It would also be impossible. For one thing, the other sections of society, and least of all professional politicians, would not yield their prerogatives to scientists. For another, it would be contrary to the principles of pluralistic societies, and it would be contrary to common sense as well. After all, scientists have not proved themselves as wise as they would have to be to justify such an arrogation of power.

V

In a little more than four decades, scientists have moved from a situation that appeared to them to be both monstrous and simple. It was monstrous in the dangers that one set of scientific achievements lay open before the world, simple in the solution that could dissipate those dangers. Some scientists, like my late friend Eugene Rabinowitch, thought that the scientific method that had led to the monstrosity would also lead the way to the solution. He thought that the scientific method could replace the vagaries of political passion, ideology, and self-righteousness. The young scientists and some of the older ones thought in 1945 and 1946 that they must tell politicians and the public of what they knew on the basis of their participation in the construction of the atomic bomb; they thought that this dreadful knowledge would make it unquestionably clear that international control of some sort was the only solution.

They found the world of international politics obdurate to their

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honorable appeals and to their ingenuity; what appeared to them to be self-evident was passed over. The simple and anguished sense of urgency faded, partly from disillusionment over the skepticism and frivolity of politicians who resisted persuasion by the voice of reason, partly from the gratifications and distractions attendant on the new centrality of scientific research and the scientists who did it.

The latter distractions have not diminished; they have increased. These distractions have become a permanent and integral part of the lives of scientists. So much is now expected of them. Governments would not allow themselves to dispense with the services of scientists as advisors, as expert witnesses, and as authors of reports on nearly every conceivable technological, medical, military, economic, and agricultural problem to which scientific knowledge is relevant. Government departments employ scientists to perform research for them, within their own research divisions and outside, on contracts. Universities perform much research on contract. Scientists have entered into public debates; they are drawn into the popular presentations of the results of their research in newspapers, in periodicals, and on television. They must make representations to civil servants and to legislative bodies for funds for their own research and the research of others; they must advise on how these funds are to be spent, and on which problems, projects, and persons. They must advise cabinets, civil servants, and legislators on the technological feasibility of the application of scientific discoveries. Many senior scientists are so drawn into these activities, which have become a permanent matrix of the primary activity of scientific research and the teaching and training of young scientists, that they have too little time for their own primary scientific activities.

Nevertheless, despite this thick and dense penumbra that surrounds science, scientific work goes on and scientific knowledge grows. It has not been suffocated by being so crowded by all of these other activities that testify to the widespread and public recognition of its importance. All these other activities would not exist if scientists, young and old, were not doing research and if the older ones were not training the younger generation to carry on the scientific tradition and to extend and improve it.

The scientists who engage in these penumbral activities have, for the most part, been able to keep fresh in their minds the distinction between the center of the scientific community in which scientific research, teaching, and training are conducted, and the periphery of political, economic, and social activities with which the scientific community is in intense interaction. These scientists should constantly remind themselves that scientific knowledge and political activity are two different

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things. The more scientists engage in these peripheral but very important activities, the more they should be aware of their differences.

An honorable politician takes scientific knowledge into account in his decisions where it is relevant. He tries to know as much of it as he can, but he does not renounce the obligation to make the decisions for which he is constitutionally responsible. An honorable scientist adheres as rigorously as he can to the rules of truth-seeking in his subject; he claims no more for his knowledge than is permitted in his methodically made observations, his rationally critical theories, and his disciplined, self-critical imagination. He must remind himself constantly that his scientific knowledge is entitled to the agreement of others, non-scientists as well as scientists, only if it is scientifically true; he also knows that his scientific knowledge confers on him neither a constitutional nor legal nor an epistemological right to declare that his political views are based entirely on his scientific knowledge. He should admit ignorance and uncertainty where he does not know and where he is uncertain, and he must not shirk from acknowledging in public that he is ignorant or uncertain about many of the issues on which his advice is sought or where he gives advice on his own initiative. He must acknowledge the limits of scientific knowledge, limits that are determined by the present state of knowledge and by the nature of scientific knowledge itself.

I do not wish to be understood as saying that the scientist should care only about his science, come what may, and that he should say as far as the rest of life is concerned, "let the devil take the hindmost." The fact that foresight over long stretches of time is impossible, the fact that the scientist cannot arrogate to himself all power over the application of his own discoveries, does not mean that a scientist should be utterly indifferent to what is done with his knowledge when he can see what it is that is being done, or what is reasonably likely to be done. It does not mean that he should use scientific procedures that do damage to other persons who are on his staff or who are his subjects or to individuals who are neither his collaborators nor his assistants nor his subjects. He should not perform or tolerate the performance of immoral actions in order to obtain materials or to make observations for his research.

It is not so difficult to abide by ethical rules with regard to actions that one is performing at the moment or that are to be performed in the immediate future. Perhaps the present governmental regulations for the enforcement of these rules are not all that they should be, but they at least refer to actions that can be subjected to the scientists' own control and to probable consequences that can be plausibly predicted.

It is more difficult to abide by ethical rules that refer to actions by other persons remotely in the future and by other persons who are beyond the control of the actor, in this case the scientist. An answer to

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this observation by those who stress the responsibility of the scientist for the practical application of his knowledge is that the responsibility of the scientist does not entail controlling the actions of other persons; it entails only the self-control of the scientist in the performance of research of dangerous potentialities. Since nothing can be foreseen regarding the remote repercussions of present research, the only way to avoid danger is to abstain entirely from research. This is clearly an alternative that is honorably open to any scientist who takes this point of view.

The application of the principle of the obligation to control the repercussions and ramifications of one's actions further than the imagination can realistically reach should, if applied at all, be applied to everyone in society. Under the universal application of this principle, politicians should abstain from all decisions that might have injurious consequences in the long run; parents likewise; teachers likewise. The parents of one generation should be charged with the misdeeds of their great-grandchildren. It is patent that this makes no sense. Yet this is what is sought, mutatis mutandis, by those who would demand of scientists the responsibility for the unforeseeable consequences of their discoveries.

VI

Yet, although it is necessary to reject exorbitant and unfulfillable demands on scientists to adhere to an utterly unrealistic moral standard, they do have responsibilities corresponding to the roles into which they enter. The traditional role of the scientist—the role that defines him as a scientist—is the pursuit of truth about nature, including human beings and human societies, by the best possible methods and in the light of the best available theories and accounts contained in the literature of the field of inquiry. This traditional role was enlarged when science became an academic subject entailing the teaching of the subject to young persons and the training of young persons to enter upon scientific research and teaching as a career.

Regarding the former role, although there is neither a code of explicit rules nor a body of precisely formulated law that prescribes the obligations of the role of the pursuit and transmission of scientific truths, an inarticulated code does obtain, and practically all scientists adhere to it. Regarding the roles of the teacher and the supervisor of research-students, the range of variation is greater, but there, too, the rules and traditions of institutions require that truths be conscientiously taught, that the knowledge transmitted should not be outdated, that the candidate not be passed regardless of his achievement, and many other platitudes of fundamental importance. Again, as in research, the rules are

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not precisely or explicitly articulated, but it is known when they are being infringed.

Beyond these central roles, there has been a great accretion of roles that have arisen from the heightened public expectations of science, the greatly increased cost and the greatly increased financial resources of science, the desire of governments and legislative bodies and business enterprises for the application of scientific knowledge in their activities and for advice on which scientific fields, persons, and projects to support.

The rules for the performance of these roles are more weakly implanted in the scientific community. Insofar as it is a matter of the performance of scientific research within governmental or private research institutions, the rules are not different from the rules for the conduct of research within academic institutions, except for the restrictions in some of the parts of governments and in private business firms on the freedom of communication of the results of research.

The advisory roles are new, particularly on the large scale which they have attained in recent decades. Accordingly, the ethical norms of advice have not become well established there. The issue is the degree of partisanship of advice on substantive problems and the extent to which the scientist's advice is justified by its scientific validity. Laymen do turn to scientists for advice that they think is both objective and definitive, but it is often the case that the existing stock of valid knowledge is not sufficient to justify an unambiguous assertion regarding the costs and benefits of a particular policy. This is a difficulty that is not always frankly admitted by scientists acting as advisors. Objectivity is a very crucial element in the giving of scientific advice. Advisors are too frequently chosen not so much because the legislators and officials want advice as because they want apparently authoritative support for the policies they propose to follow. It is obvious that in complying with these desires, the legislators and the officials are in collusion with the scientists to exploit the prestige that scientists have acquired for objectivity and disinterestedness.

Beyond the advisory function in matters of substantive policy, there is also the role of advising officials of governmental and private philanthropic bodies regarding science policy and in the award of grants for the support of research. The device of a panel of assessors who assess proposals for research gives much power to the assessors over the direction of research and over the careers of scientists. In this activity, too, beyond generalities regarding the need for disinterestedness and honesty, answers to the question of how scientists who serve as advisors in the allocation of funds can serve science best have still to be discovered, particularly in a period when the funds to be allocated are not ample enough to dispense with the necessity of selective allocation.

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Finally there is the complex of roles of scientists in public discussion through representations made on behalf of quasi-political associations and through participation in public meetings, broadcasting, and journalism. Scientists have become much more active politically than they used to be, and on many issues that touch on science and technology they play prominent parts. Here, too, there is nothing like an ethical code for scientists.

There is as yet no sound tradition such as exists at the heart of science to guide action in these activities that are at the periphery of science itself but that are of the greatest importance to society. It is not a matter that can be decided by fiat. It is not even a matter on which declarations of principles by scientific associations can produce a definitive answer that will find consensual acceptance. Such declarations of principles would be a step in the right direction. But nothing can be a substitute for reflective self-examination on the part of the scientists who participate in these activities.

VIII

When my friends and acquaintances of the "atomic scientists' movement" began their brave undertaking in the last months of 1945, there was, despite the awfulness of the atomic bomb, a tone of optimism in the air, at least in the United States. The atomic bomb was awful, and its very awfulness made it appear not insuperably difficult to persuade the world to eschew its production. The path seemed fairly clearly laid out, although there were many obstacles, such as shortsighted conceptions of national interest, naive ideas about the efficacy of keeping "the secret" indefinitely, personal and national vanity, and obstinate prejudice. The views of the "atomic scientists' movement" were naive; Jacob Viner's less sanguine, but far from hopeless, views were much sounder.

Since that time, the problems raised by the atomic bomb have not been solved. Instead of a solution to that problem, many more problems, practically none of which was foreseen, have arisen. Science has indeed entered "a new world."

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A Trenta-sei for John Ciardi
(1916–1986)

JOHN STONE

Love should intend realities: goodbye.
—John Ciardi

In the beginning was the word, as noted
(in the end, too, if truth be known)—
Mercy next, then Love, and, gravel-throated,
a distinctive Grace enduring as the stone.
From these were made a better man than most.
We say good-bye today, old crow, gruff ghost.

In the end, too, if truth be known,
was clean white paper waiting under a pen—
a gift of hand, eye, ear, and knucklebone
from Boston to Vermont and back again
to Jersey, Georgia, Key West—in every state
he came to talk and stayed to celebrate

Mercy next, then Love. And, gravel-throated,
the man became the word on which he fed
until he fed us all—and what he quoted
was from the major kingdom in his head
comprised not least of children's poems—crows,
pythons, sharks with teeth in rows.

A distinctive Grace enduring as the stone
or bronze or steel sculptors bring to life
he brought to his—and ours—though not alone,

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for one enduring grace became his wife:
To her he'd bow and gratefully concede
that men have always married what they need.

From these were made a better man than most
who moved the word from mind to pen to writing
and made the books from wisdom and a host
of wars he never seemed to tire of fighting
especially those he thought he'd surely win
(as well as some he reveled in like sin).

We say good-bye today, old crow, gruff ghost.
That's never worked before—and will not now.
No good comes of good-bye. Instead, a toast
(in whatever form the authorities will allow)
to you—to us—in minor fifths and thirds.
Along the way you found we'll find the words.

✪ JOHN STONE sees patients and teaches at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta. His third book of poems, *Renaming the Streets*, was published in 1985. The trenta-sei was invented by John Ciardi during the last years of his life and perfected in its current rhymed form during his final year.

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Libraries and Learning

OSCAR HANDLIN

AMONG THE UNCOUNTED CASUALTIES of the modern information explosion are the research libraries—and particularly those in the United States. The increase in the sheer volume of available data has exposed issues too long postponed, while the cavalier attitudes of users and administrators have persistently impeded the search for acceptable solutions. The result endangers a valuable cultural asset, long rendered vulnerable by neglect.

All libraries store and make available some bits of information, generally in the form of printed books and magazines, but also on films and disks. But research libraries aim to do more; they offer scholars the means of reorganizing the information assembled and thereby help to expand the store of knowledge.

Size is therefore an important, though not the sole, indication of function. The great research libraries measure their holdings in millions rather than in thousands of volumes. Some one hundred North American institutions claim membership in the prestigious Association of Research Libraries; but there is widespread agreement that twenty-five to thirty is a more realistic figure for those libraries with genuine breadth of coverage. The Library of Congress, the public libraries of New York and Boston, and the libraries of major universities together bear the preponderant share of the burden of sustaining scholarship in the United States and Canada. But smaller institutions that focus on special subjects or that render more intimate service to colleges also play a part. All are in danger.

Certainly the fund of information available has risen at a staggering pace in the past hundred and fifty years. All such statistics rest on metaphorical impressions, but it seems likely that the amount of information available in Western society doubled between 1850 and 1925; did so once again between 1925 and 1950; yet again between 1950 and 1970; and has doubled still again since then. The number of new books published in the United States rose from 36,071 in 1970 to 51,058 in 1984

OSCAR HANDLIN, Carl M. Loeb University Professor at Harvard University, is the author of many historical works, including, most recently, *Liberty and Power.*

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(in addition to some 100,000 titles imported that year). The output of journals and other serials soared even more dramatically; and prices mounted as though no ceiling existed. In the decade after 1975, the average cost of a hardcover volume just about doubled and that of a journal subscription almost tripled. The need to accumulate, store, and make this material accessible has created problems of enormous proportions.

The quantitative increase in output is but the beginning of the libraries' difficulties. No institution can acquire everything published; each one must year after year decide which books and periodicals to purchase and which to forgo, in a delicate judgment among competing needs, present and future, instructional and research. The task becomes ever more difficult.

At one time, acquisitions fell within the well-defined lines of familiar disciplines, each with its own canon of classics and their commentaries; in the past quarter century, the best-known landmarks have disappeared. Entirely new fields have arisen, each divided into specialties and subspecialties, thus compounding the difficulties of selection. The swelling size of the catalogues in which colleges list their courses of instruction offers a pale reflection of the dilemmas of libraries' choices.

In the past, also, the concentration of the book trade in a few publishing centers eased the task of tracking output. Now, learning has acquired global dimensions. Books—important to someone—bear the imprints of Accra and Dacca as well as of New York and London, so that acquisition staffs must establish worldwide connections to keep up.

Meanwhile, everywhere, high publishing and inventory costs have diminished the time books remain in print. Purchasers who wait for reviews or simply procrastinate over their choices for a few years find the work unavailable.

Even were their budgets infinitely expandable, bibliographers and book selectors, pressed to decide, cannot simply assume that more is better, any more than a student can assume that the proliferation of course offerings improves education. The multiplication of publications and of courses may increase information, but by no means invariably expands knowledge (much less wisdom). The appearance of growth in both cases often is simply the outcome of inflationary tendencies built into modern academic life.

The flow of books that swirls about the libraries emanates in the United States from commercial publishers, from some eighty university presses, and from houses that specialize in a particular science or discipline. But the library cannot simply hinge its decision on imprint; for all of its suppliers bow to the same imperative—they must publish something or perish; and the peer review process upon which all rely, as

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do university deans and presidents and foundation executives, inexorably increases output.

Publishers, like agencies that award grants and fellowships and universities that appoint and promote faculty members, depend on panels of experts from within a field to judge the relative merits of competing applicants. The underlying assumption that only the initiates possess the competence to arrive at valid judgments in these matters rests on faith alone. Absolutely no evidence confirms the belief that peer review yields reliable results; and fragments of evidence suggest that it hardly does better than random choice.

The publishing universe consists of small closed circles of authors and readers. Each group of peers defines itself in professional terms, employing its own language, addressing its own problems, largely walled off from others outside the circle. The product each generates finds its primary outlet in journals, but occasionally also in books, for the increase in the number of scientific periodicals has not diminished the desire of authors to see the products of their research bound in hard covers, perhaps out of vanity, perhaps out of some longing for permanence. Books are generally, though not always, more likely to attract notice and reviews than are articles; and they may count for more in the publication record that advances careers. Yet the knowledge game offers few opportunities to lay permanence by the heels; rare is the volume that remains in print for five years. And not all this activity actually adds to the fund of knowledge. Studies of the frequency with which books or articles are cited show that a small number are very much used by other scholars, but a greater number rarely or never are. That criterion is no doubt fallible; citations usually confirm views already well established. Still, it is altogether probable that a great many books and articles, never read, contribute nothing to scholarship, and their absence from the library shelves would pass unnoticed. Which? That is the librarians' question. They must tune out the static to permit valid messages to get through.

Editorial decisions, like the fashions of dress designers, are subject to the constraints of opinion within a small circle upon which economic viability hangs. The numbers involved are not large; sales of a thousand copies will do for a monograph, half that number of subscribers for a journal. Research libraries form a captive market, and the copies they acquire can make or break a publication. Authors or potential authors are expected to place subscriptions in their institutions and, indeed, in local bookshops.

The heady years of academic expansion after 1960 speedily inflated those mini-markets and the publications they sustained. In the 1970s, prices of books and periodicals more than doubled. Then deflation

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followed upon the decline in reading habits and competition with alternative means of storing information. The circulation of journals in some fields fell precipitously. But prices did not decline in these non-competitive markets within which libraries were helpless consumers.

Retrenchment in budgets and grants and sharp inflationary leaps in costs create the scarcely resistible pressure to conform to informed opinion shaped within enclosed little circles. For the scholar as for the publisher, safety lies in refuge within the palisade. The fields of specialization increase in number and, in the process, become ever narrower, each with its own fighting force of experts who police the perimeter, cut off from the other circles sprinkled across the academic landscape. Communications among the posts become faint; and as those enclosed within each cease to hear other voices than their own, the messages grow sterile, repetitious, and self-confirming. To match the trend within the disciplines, publishers also tend toward specialization. The flow of print, often pointless but sustained by grants and by professional inertia, raises the tide of mediocrity and befogs the goals of scholarship.

Decisions call for difficult choices. The *Journal of Econometrics*, published in Germany, raised its subscription price from $163 in 1978 to $338 in 1979. Renew, or let it lapse? The few experts will no doubt wish it continued. But at the expense of the Dutch *Journal of Chromatography*, $1,730, or the English *Tetrehedron*, $1,000? And how many readers justify the cost? Librarians who themselves disclaim the scholarly power to judge the worth of particular books or journals must follow specialized informed opinion in acquisition decisions. They are as helpless as the dean or president who notes the mushrooming courses in urbanism in the departments of history, sociology, anthropology, political science, geography, and literature, but will not venture to seek out duplications or investigate the worth of all the subspecialties. The more usual administrative response—creation of an interdisciplinary committee to offer still more courses—thereby recognizes still another subspecialty. The instinctive library response would also shy away from a choice, except that financial constraints close off that line of escape.

The volumes gathered in a research library, therefore, do not simply flow together as rivulets of rain accumulate in a pool. Apart from the budget conferences to cajole legislators, deans, provosts, chancellors, and presidents into making the required funds available, assembling the books and journals is only the beginning and not the end of problems. Collections require constant nurture; they must be catalogued, housed, preserved, pruned, and added to. There is no end to it.

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Fiscal restraints limit the capacity to respond. Although some pressures have eased in recent years, inflation played havoc with budgets for more than a decade, for the labor-intensive operations of the libraries meant steadily rising costs. In the same years, the declining value of the dollar hampered the ability of research libraries to lay hands on works printed abroad—and particularly in Japan and Germany. Straitened government revenues set caps on the budgets of national and municipal libraries—which in any case devote sizable portions of their resources to activities other than research. A large part of the total burden therefore falls, as it should, on the nation's colleges and universities, for libraries play an important part in the education they proffer. Library costs run to more than 4 percent of the total expenditures of research universities.

In the desperate effort to escape the consequences of escalating costs, libraries fastened their hopes on collaboration and automation. Mutual assistance, it was thought, would strengthen their capacity to meet common problems; and the computer would serve them as it had many sectors of the economy—by increasing efficiency. Neither course opened a road to salvation.

Efforts at collaboration, however plausible, ran up against decentralized controls, which impeded planning, and inequality of resources, which complicated the allocation of costs. Cooperation promised to reduce the expense of little-used collections and esoteric journals. No one challenged the proposition that one copy of works not likely to be frequently consulted would be enough, if made available everywhere in the country through interlibrary loan. The Farmington Plan (1949), sponsored by the Association of Research Libraries and the Council on Library Resources, provided a mechanism by which some sixty institutions voluntarily assumed assigned responsibilities for collecting in foreign countries. The efforts to provide coverage and avoid duplication collapsed after a little more than a decade, however. An ambitious scheme for a National Periodicals Center aimed to lighten the load of serial costs, but failed to get beyond the planning stage. The most successful cooperative venture, the Center for Research Libraries (Chicago), enjoys some foundation support and is self-evidently useful, yet labors under the constant strain of niggling criticism.

For a time, technology promised relief from escalating costs. The computer seemed at once to render the familiar trays of catalogue cards anachronistic. Those laboriously interfiled cards—each the product of a skilled cataloguer—seemed relics of a primitive age when speedily produced machine-readable records could perform the task reliably and economically. Furthermore, a national network could establish communications among the research libraries, make bibliographic information universally available, and permit economies by eliminating expensive

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duplication of activities. A library could thus avoid expensive acquisitions when it knew that it could promptly provide the reader with the work under consideration through interlibrary loan. No purchase needed. The same linkage would also prevent the needless duplicate filming of moldering volumes that required preservation.

Above all, networks would also simplify the task of cataloguing and thereby reduce its immense costs. In scores of institutions, an army of cataloguers processed the same books according to the same rules, basically those set by the Library of Congress. Each task performed once with the product speedily transmitted to all participants would eliminate repetitive effort and conserve labor. Imaginations leaped eagerly forward to visions of completely electronic libraries; and the states of Ohio and Washington, along with such universities as Stanford, Chicago, Penn State, and Northwestern, launched ambitious and expensive schemes for mechanization, which varied in the degree of their success and effectiveness. In the long term, none significantly lowered costs. The California State University Libraries in 1976 projected a twenty-five-million-dollar savings from automation by 1984. But, in 1982, an auditing team from the state legislature, after vainly searching the nineteen campuses for the promised economies, recommended deep slashes in appropriations.

Cooperation and technology nevertheless continued to lure foundations concerned with the libraries' future. Fearing an endless drain on resources if they dealt one by one with a succession of applications from individual worthy institutions, Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Mellon, through a joint Library Committee and through the Council on Library Resources, sought to encourage collaboration and to penalize recalcitrants. In 1974, after some years of study, with the Mellon Foundation in the lead, they blessed the formation of the Research Libraries Group—originally consisting of four members, later somewhat expanded in size. Despite continuing foundation support, the R.L.G. never attained the goal of reducing cataloguing costs before further technological changes made the whole notion of centralized processing anachronistic.

The search for some means of evading inescapable costs reveals the perception of danger. The library, and its kind of learning, are now under siege, surrounded by enemies without and within.

The external enemies are the most readily identified. The unwillingness to pay the costs reveals deep-rooted doubts about the worth of these institutions. A sensate culture that puts all rewards in terms of immediate gratification rather than of long-term satisfactions is hostile to reflection; within it, bumper-sticker slogans are more expressive than subtly qualified ideas. In the numbing bombardment by the media, utopian and apocalyptic images alternate—now medicine will extend life indefi-

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nitely through replaceable parts; now leaking toxins will destroy us all. The incessant din and ubiquitous distractions of such a society divert the potential reader, who becomes apathetic toward, if not hostile to, books. While the multiple-choice answer replaces the essay as an instrument for measuring learning, education becomes the process of training the student to provide the expected response, for which the computer is an admirable instrument. These external enemies, in the competition against the libraries for audience attention, enjoy the vastly superior resources of the modern electronic and print media.

The internal enemies are more difficult to identify, for the educational establishment still gives at least lip service to the book and to the library. But the hyperspecialists, who increasingly populate the faculties, usually value only the materials they themselves use and regard alien collections as distracting drains upon resources. The researcher who is content with the journals and books of immediate interest regards the inchoate general library, staffed by irrelevant dilettantes, as a waste.

Furthermore, the primary function of the university has become the preparation of technicians—and often for entirely laudable motives. Increasingly geared to filling the need for skilled practitioners of medicine, law, government, and business, American higher education can and should equip the economy with trained workers, assure a flow of competent technicians to hospitals and courts, and keep engineers and politicians abreast of current knowledge in their fields. Insofar as the university can transmit those skills, it should. And the library serves a useful function in performing that task, housing as it does a huge database from which users can draw vast stores of information.

Since it is a partner in this kind of society, the university must accept and work within it. Yet it must also be aware that the users who dip into its libraries for bits of information do not thereby become readers, thinkers. Locating a bit of information and pondering its meaning are two entirely different intellectual processes. Information must be correct, current, concise, clear and unambiguous—qualities associated, for instance, with rendering a prompt judgment in the diagnosis of an illness or in the design of specifications for a bridge. Correct, current, concise, clear and unambiguous—these are the traits valued in action. And a certain kind of teaching aims to coach its students to return, on demand, answers that are correct, current, concise, clear and unambiguous.

However, another kind of teaching aims to raise questions rather than to answer them. Correct, current, concise, clear and unambiguous are not the only values in learning—perhaps not even the highest values; and they are certainly not the attributes associated with browsing among books. Browsing may indeed wrap ideas in qualifications and conditions that challenge the imagination but do not yield precise answers. Deci-

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sions require a response—Yes. Or, No. But not, perhaps, Maybe. "Sort of correct" will not do!

It is not now surprising, therefore, to meet students in law, business, and medicine so busy studying that they have no time, and feel no need, to read. It is not now surprising to encounter freshmen, well prepared for answering examination questions, who have never read a book—that is, *read*, as distinguished from *studied*. It is becoming even less surprising to hear the same disclaimer from graduate students in the humanities and social sciences. A pity no doubt! For these people, left unprepared when encountering life's crises, may discover the inadequacies of formulas, yet may not even know that they miss the habit of reflection that immersion in books brings.

This is the reality of the world within which the library and the university function, a world dense with enemies from without and from within.

Withdrawal is one possible response to attacks upon the library. Escape the foe behind thick walls. *The Name of the Rose* describes the strategy of a medieval monastery. The library in the novel is laid out on a plan that, over the centuries, remained obscure to all. The librarian who received the secret from his predecessor will communicate it to the assistant librarian, so that death will not rob the community of that knowledge. Only the librarian, however, has the right to move through the labyrinth of books; he alone knows where to find them and where to replace them; he alone is responsible for their safekeeping. Only he knows from the collocation of the volumes, from their degree of inaccessibility, what secrets, what truths or falsehoods, they contain; and he decides who may consult what, because not all truths are for all ears, not all falsehoods can be recognized as such.

That much is fiction, but not really fictitious. There were such places in real life. One can even find survivals now. At Santa Catarina in the Sinai an ancient library stood—guarded but unused for centuries, so that the custodians themselves knew little of the contents until intrusive outsiders exposed their worth. Inaccessibility froze its treasures in time. And some libraries in our own society also function as museums, regarding every user as a potential abuser. They put the security of the treasure ahead of access to it, dig moats to keep the rude and uninitiated away from their treasures, and invite the visitor to look and admire, not to touch or read.

There are alternative tactics—at least two ways to survive in an unpropitious environment without withdrawal or concealment. One means of survival is to buy off the enemy by becoming useful to him. The library contains a file of information, a file valuable to trained people

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inside and outside the university. Readers come to it to ascertain facts—numbers, dates, locations.

It is true that books—encyclopedias, dictionaries, abstracts, manuals, and the like—are no longer the most compact, most convenient form in which to package data. Computer-based files provide easy electronic access to millions of bits of data in ways that print cannot replicate. Word that the *Oxford English Dictionary* is being computerized is a reminder of the futility of maintaining dictionaries, statistical series, even encyclopedias in book form when their contents become more readily available in electronic form. Many conventional instructional and reference practices will therefore become anachronistic; casebooks and collections of texts, kept current or gotten up *de novo* each year, can be distributed electronically or by photocopy at less cost than they can be stored in a library. Already some students can dial up information out of data banks from terminals in numerous locations around the wired campus. But the library will still have a function; it will need only enlarge its banks of machines, improve them, and provide a referral service advising users what numbers to call.

Libraries, however, no longer hold a monopoly on information; a flourishing industry now makes such data available through numerous alternative channels. More than a thousand commercial enterprises prepare, maintain, and distribute materials in the United States. An encyclopedia (1985–86) arrays fully 3,300 organizations that produce information in electronic form. The library may not be able to compete in this market, and in any case, the effort to do so may divert attention from what it alone can provide—access to its collections. It will thereby also surrender its role in higher education.

The other alternative to concealment is neither to dig moats nor to buy off the enemy, but to build bridges, to invite the public to sample the collections that the library alone possesses, and thus to demonstrate their unique capabilities.

The machines that supply databases and bibliographies with superb efficiency do one thing only: they repeat what is put into them. To a question asked, they return a programmed answer. Libraries, however, like teaching, can do more than provide information on request. Information is not knowledge, any more than knowledge is wisdom. In the university and outside it, those who learn at all levels strive to create knowledge, not merely to tap into that already available. Really creative work permits or compels students, teachers, and scholars to look for answers to questions they cannot formulate, to look even when they do not know what question to ask. To serve that long-term, reflective purpose, the research library—however large or small—presents its users, not single books or bits of information stored as in a warehouse,

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but collections, each the product of a decision by someone to assemble material on this subject and not on that. A collection is evidence of a mind at work, making choices in the light of some view of knowledge—past, present, and future. The decision may emanate from a scholar who assembles books, papers, or things according to some inner vision, then transfers the whole to the library where it becomes part of a still larger whole. Or, the decision may emanate from a librarian.

Scholar-collectors are biased, having, through their studies, defined their own questions; their gatherings therefore tend to be static, aiming to consolidate past learning. By contrast, librarians can look to the future, anticipate the direction of research, and acquire materials available now that may not be available later. They can stand at the leading edge of learning, close enough to scholars to know their needs but not tied to the present, able to contemplate the future. The fruit of such effort is the collection—not a random agglomeration, but a coherent selection.

Yet library users cannot put their faith blindly in the custodians of the books. Librarians—even the ablest and best disposed of them—often unwittingly and out of apparent necessity create obstacles to access. Persistent learners must surmount such obstacles too. They will have no difficulty in imagining two hundred volumes, or even two thousand volumes. They will find it much more difficult to envision two hundred thousand, and two million or ten million will be altogether beyond their grasp. Whoever tries to focus on quantities of such magnitude will see only a building. The problem is how to find a particular one among the millions. And if the particular one is not known by name, but only the topic treated, or a question related to such a topic—there is a greater problem still.

The solutions librarians have proffered have varied, for they are related to the purpose of the collection. If books serve a primarily decorative function, it makes sense to go by the color of the binding. Then a wall becomes harmonious splotches of leather and buckram—blue, maroon, and buff. If the exigencies of space are salient, then size is the most convenient and most economical mode of organizations. Putting all the big folios together, and stacking all the little octavos on shelves of the proper size, makes for the most advantageous use of space. If operational costs are primary, it makes sense simply to shelve books by the date of acquisition. Or it is possible to arrange books by publication date, or alphabetically by title. Then a user need only know a date or title to locate the desired material. But of course not all potential readers know even that little. Someone wants to know about Napoléon or the Crusades, or the Inquisition. It would be time-consuming, perhaps discouraging, to have each person hunt up the desired book unaided.

Hence the prodigious effort expended year after year in defining and

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refining classification schemes. Every library user knows about Fiction and Non-Fiction, about the little numbers and dots that order the place of each book on the shelf, and about the subject catalogues with their elaborate headings. But only the professionally aware know what enormous care goes into the decisions that achieve uniformity not only within a single library but nationally and internationally. For it would be disconcerting to have a reader in St. Louis look under *Napoléon Bonaparte,* but find that in Chicago the heading was *Bonaparte, Napoléon.* There is no absolute reason why the decision should go one way or the other, so long as it is consistent and uniform—which is why decisions of this sort are so difficult to make. Valiant committees at the Library of Congress, laboring at the task in cooperation with their opposite numbers in other national libraries, periodically revise the accepted headings; and their efforts reverberate throughout the United States—the ultimate purpose being to ease access to the millions of volumes.

The arcane process, essential to availability, leaves users uneasy. Everyone understands the distinction between Fiction and Non-Fiction, but not why plays are Non-Fiction. All drama is Non-Fiction, for reasons not plain on the face of it, which may account for the enormous energy expended on cataloguing. A recent bulletin from the Library of Congress announced the following decisions:

Cornwall, Eng. This heading has been superseded. See Cornwall

Jewish Sermons. See Sermons, Jewish

Processions, Ecclesiastical replaced by *Processions, Religious*

Rhodesian replaced by *Zambian* AND *Zimbabwean*

Hazardous waste facilities replaced by *Hazardous waste sites*

This degree of precision may be desirable, although not perhaps an end in itself, and not if it locks the reader into a set of predetermined categories. Expensive projects at retrospective conversion, mammoth enterprises by which some librarians would like to turn all past records into a single machine-readable file, fail to attract the support of users aware of the cost and accustomed to consult more than one bibliography at a time. Experienced scholars know how to elbow their way past the obstacles of classification. Whole new fields periodically flash their way across the world of learning—molecular and microbiology scarcely existed a generation ago; and the rapid changes in advanced mathematics make established classifications irrelevant. Then, too, interdisciplinary crisscrossings call all established lines into question; one cannot know about oncology without knowing about immunology.

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Above all, every scholar knows—or should know—that not all knowledge is cumulative, that the latest book is not necessarily better than an earlier one, and that some new subjects simply dress the old corpus up in flashy but insubstantial raiment. Justice was a subject of inquiry long before John Rawls and Robert Nozick delivered their views on it; and it may well be that their books have not rendered anachronistic those of the line of writers from Plato to Hume who also treated it. Long before family history, the history of women, and Afro-American history achieved academic status, substantial works—not yet outdated—treated marriage, children, wives, blacks, and slaves, so that it is perilous to take date of publication as a guide.

What the experienced scholar knows may not resolve the plight of that potential reader who edges his way diffidently into the library, not on an assignment, reading list in hand, but simply out of curiosity, wanting to know about Napoléon or the Crusades. This encounter is crucial to the future of the library. If it fails to satisfy, the inquirer will turn away, go back to the screen—television or computer, no matter—and never know what he or she missed. But if the experience satisfies, it may begin to draw the potential reader into a lifelong concern with books.

There is a card catalogue or a terminal that delivers a printout. Either way, a confrontation ensues with a dozen or with hundreds of titles, depending upon the size of the library. What next? The friendly reference librarian may have views and may suggest a standard treatment or may point to a bibliography. The odds are that neither suggestion will effect a conversion; for, standard treatments and bibliographies express a consensus, pretty much frozen; and the chances are not good that they will respond to the particular needs of the kind of person that potential reader is. It may well be, for some, that Stendhal will provide a better way of knowing about Napoléon than any listing in the bibliography.

In the last analysis, only the reader knows what kind of person he or she is; and the library must make that tray of cards or computer printout a challenge rather than an obstacle. Put the collections within reach; no national lending network will do as well. In fact, swamp them with books—some will yield to the temptation. Jolt them out of complacency—not all the correct answers are known; not all the right questions have even been asked. There is still opportunity for involvement in the long process of asking and answering, of which these collections are evidence. Undergraduate or specialized departmental libraries that aim to divert users away from the major research collections are bound to miscarry. They can hold course reserves and ready reference tools; but

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they do not supplant the research library; they whet the appetite for it, whenever thoughts wander away from narrowly focused subjects.

Many a teacher has seen it happen—a student drifting through the stacks, dipping in at will, begins to wonder what it was that a German or Frenchman wrote about this matter, or an eighteenth-century scribbler. Perhaps by accident, the youth picks up and holds a four-hundred-year-old book! True, he or she may not be able to read those pages. True, also, there might be a temptation to steal them. But what a stimulus to the imagination to learn suddenly, dramatically, how far back and how extensively human concerns reach! The risk of loss, misuse, is worth taking if curiosity can create a reader who will go questing from volume to volume, learning what a collection is.

The library has been crucial to the way in which the university developed for the past hundred years. It was not a museum in which to store treasures but an instrument used in an intimate relationship to instruction and to scholarship, getting some young people critically involved with the contents of books. It thus aided them in finding out for themselves, in examining all received documents critically, in asking questions rather than studying answers.

Colleges and universities must recognize the educational worth of a research capability. With very few exceptions, the courses in which they usually imprison their students emit driblets of information accompanied by hollow assurances of a significance not evident on the face of it. No doubt the pool of knowledge thus formed will in time bear the fortunate to a degree; but the rewards promised and the sanctions threatened are unpersuasive, emanating as they do from enterprises aimed simply at transferring a defined body of facts, formulas, techniques, and theories from one side of the classroom to another. College thus regarded only extends the boredom and agony of all previous schools attended—except for those able to wriggle out of the tight shoes, spread their toes, and escape confinement by finding refuge in the laboratories or, above all, in libraries.

The difference is clear: in the library, no one tells students what to read; they roam where their own interests lead. No one doles out information; they seek knowledge where they wish. The library is a place of learning as the school is not, a place where questions are not stifled in ready answers but provoke thought, and where one thought leads to another. The warfare between the established learning ensconced in the schoolroom and lecture hall and the subversive learning hidden in the libraries is more acute and more vital than ever. The outcome will decisively influence our culture.

There is no simple solution to the problems of the research library. A free, affluent, and pluralistic society will not stanch the flow of publica-

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tions, or confide to any person or committee the power to decide what will see print or not, what to collect and preserve, what to discard. Furthermore, the ever-deepening tendency to specialization will dull the selective power of the peer review process, while the number of books and journals produced seems not likely to decline. Nor will the cost.

The librarians attempt to cope; but the libraries are too important to leave to them. Since they usually count themselves as members of the administration, they tend to align themselves with presidents, deans, and provosts and too readily acquiesce in budgetary constraints. They are also excessively vigilant, on guard against interference by users whom they too often treat as adversaries rather than as allies.

The issue, finally, is educational and turns on the openness of learning. Large or small, the research library not only offers readers information; it invites them to quest for knowledge. Teachers and students therefore have an evident concern with its welfare. Yet the academic people who should be most concerned show no awareness of their stake in the research library. However ready they may be to pronounce on the affairs of the country, the world, the universe, they are surprisingly reticent when it comes to defining their own self-interest. Having always regarded the library as a free good that somebody will somehow supply, they react to inadequacies with either apathy or fatalism. They leave to administrators, specialists, and technicians problems outside of their own specialties that seem too big and too complex to understand but that will only yield to a creative interplay between users and librarians.

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"Canst Thou Not Minister to a Mind Diseas'd?"

CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK

IN THE TRAGEDY BY EURIPIDES, Heracles comes home in triumph after the heavy labors inflicted on him by the goddess Hera. His wife has been waiting for him for a long time. They have a brief and happy reunion. Then, totally without warning, he goes mad and slaughters her and his two young sons, only to awaken to the inexplicability of what he has done. It is a not unfamiliar kind of event; however little we may know of Heracles, we watch the evening news. A psychotic episode is what we would call it today, and we would anticipate a successful insanity defense. Euripides sent Madness herself onstage—Lussa—to show the characteristic sudden onset. He made clear that Heracles had done nothing to bring on this pointless horror; it occurred merely because Hera hated him—for her own thoroughly personal, thoroughly contemptible reasons. So difficult is it to understand where madness comes from.

Mental illness is as endemic in literature as in life. The hero Ajax, in Sophocles' tragedy, suffers the same kind of sudden, destructive attack, after which, in shame, he commits suicide. Unlike Heracles', his madness is called a divine illness—a *theia nosos*. Like Heracles', it is inflicted by a goddess—ironically, Athena, the goddess of wisdom. She had a good reason, however, unlike Hera. Sophocles was a pious man, as Euripides was not; he was not out to challenge received explanations, but to confirm them. Ajax, for all his greatness, had made a very serious error; he had boasted that his achievements were his own. All the stories show that it is a mistake to claim that your strength owes nothing to the gods. For Sophocles, madness and death are seen as punishment for such hubris.

The cases of Heracles and Ajax invite reconsideration of an idea, once radical, that has grown familiar to the point of cliché. Twenty-five years ago Thomas Szasz proclaimed that mental illness is a myth, a label our

CLARA CLAIBORNE PARK teaches English at Williams College and is the author of *You Are Not Alone: Understanding and Coping with Mental Illness* and *The Siege: The First Eight Years of an Autistic Child.*

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conformist society puts on a person who is different from ourselves, to devalue him, stigmatize him, cast him out, or lock him up. Michel Foucault's *Histoire de la folie*, published in America in 1965 as *Madness and Civilization*, presented a variant; invoking the trinity of Nietzsche, van Gogh, and Artaud, he saw insanity as a kind of splendid freedom. The history of psychiatric intervention was a history of repression by society. Two years later, R. D. Laing's *Politics of Experience* popularized these ideas for the receptive children of the sixties. Primitive societies, we were told, were wiser and kinder; there, the right hemisphere of the brain dominates; there, they recognize the value of the madman's visions; there, he is the shaman, the prophet. *The madman*—those who embraced this reinterpretation of the phenomena of psychiatry tended to revert to the word *madness*, long out of use in referring to the insane or mentally ill. Poetic, archaic, Shakespearean, the word *madness* lent to mental aberration an aura of romance. No one wishes to be thought insane, schizophrenic, psychotic. But are we not all a little mad? Medical terms exclude and frighten us, but *madness* opens to include us all.

Madness is an enduring experience, whether we call it Lussa or Mania or Paranoia as the Greeks did, or insanity or schizophrenia or psychosis. Every society recognizes it. As Fuller Torrey points out in *The Mind Game* (1972), every language has a word for "crazy." Even primitive societies have noted that animals go mad and that people do too. The same tribes that honor the shaman also have their plain lunatics. As with us, they are sometimes treated humanely, sometimes cast out and ridiculed. Everywhere, crazy people tend to outnumber prophets. Every culture must recognize the existence of a class of people who behave in unpredictable, yet reasonably characteristic ways—ways that range from the disconcerting to the terrifying. They are rarely treated just like other people, because the things they say and do seem to demand some kind of special treatment. The issue is, what kinds of special treatment have different societies thought appropriate, and why?

But do we not know the answers to that question, at least for our own tradition? *Daimonie!* say Homer's heroes to each other when one of them has made a crazy statement. God bless you! say we, when one of us sneezes, to encourage the demon's departure. *Daimon* is the intermediate kind of spirit, neither human nor fully divine; transformed as *demon*, the Greek word permeated the languages of Christian Europe. We have seen that fifth-century Greeks, contemporaries of Socrates, thought madness was inflicted by the gods. Scripture concurs: God sent an evil spirit upon Saul, and Jesus had the power to cast out devils.

> And one of the multitude . . . said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away. . . . And [Jesus] asked

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his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, of a child. And of times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him. . . . And Jesus rebuked the foul spirit . . . and the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead. . . . But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up, and he arose. (Mark 9:17–27)

Demons existed—fallen angels; demons could enter human souls and bodies; demons could cause mental and physical illness. If the mentally ill are thought to be possessed, will they not be treated accordingly? Do we not know that in the past—exactly when is uncertain, as we shall see—the mentally ill were tortured or burnt at the stake by superstitious Inquisitors, or, if they escaped that, chained and scourged and prayed at to get the demons out? As the psychiatrist Gregory Zilboorg wrote in 1935 in *The Medical Man and the Witch During the Renaissance,* still for most psychiatrists and psychologists the authoritative history of psychiatric treatment, "The differentiation [among] a mentally sick person, a witch, and a heretic became less and less definite, so that towards the middle of the thirteenth century these became synonymous in the mind of man."

The epidemic of witch burning reached even the shores of the New World; so Robert Burton could report in 1621, in the era of Bacon and Galileo, the case of a girl who "purged a live eel . . . a foot and a half long," which "afterwards vanished," as well as "great balls of hair, pieces of wood, pigeons' dung," and much else; "they could do no good on her with physic, but left her to the clergy," since "Wierus, Skenkius, Scribanius all agree" that such things "are done by the subtilty and illusion of the devil . . . to try us and our faith . . . 'tis for our offenses, and for the punishment of our sins, by God's permission they do it. . . . So did he afflict, Job, Saul, the lunaticks and daemoniacal persons whom Christ cured."

The agreement between Wierus, Skenkius, and Scribanius is rivaled by the modern consensus on how mental illness was explained and treated in the olden days by our naive and superstitious forefathers. The theory of demonic possession has become a commonplace in the half century since Zilboorg published *The Medical Man and the Witch During the Renaissance,* one etiology at least on which psychoanalysts, behaviorists, and neurologists agree. Thus Frederick Kiel, writing in 1975 in *The Center for Behavior Modification Newsletter,* refers casually to "the eighteenth-century view that schizophrenics were possessed by demons"; thus in 1985 Dr. Bruce Price, working on Alzheimer's disease in the neurology unit of Beth Israel Hospital, tells an interviewer for Harvard's alumni magazine that "in the 1800's any kind of mental aberration was seen as possession of some sort—demonic." One can imagine the surprise of Philippe Pinel or Benjamin Rush or Daniel

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Tuke, or any of the other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century physicians who concerned themselves with the treatment of the insane.

To condescend to the past is both tempting and pleasurable, and all too easy amid the frightening ahistoricity of our education. Yet we need not study the intellectual history of the past two hundred years to suspect generalizations that import medieval demonology into the minds of the medical contemporaries of Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, or indeed into the minds of the physicians who treated our own great-grandfathers. The past remains present if we look and listen, not in scholarly (or unscholarly) histories, but in texts that reach every high school. Shakespeare, says Jan Kott, is our contemporary, and what everybody knows about how madness was regarded in the days of yore is blankly inconsistent with what we know about Shakespeare and Shakespeare's people.

Insanity is endemic in literature. Two centuries and more before readers shuddered at the madwoman in the attic, they laughed at the mad knight of La Mancha. Shakespeare was also Cervantes' contemporary; the Renaissance, as Kenneth Clark and Erwin Panofsky have pointed out, shows a new and intense interest in mental aberration. In three of Shakespeare's four great tragedies, major characters are called mad or lunatic, or are seen as treading the border of madness; madness is an issue in several of the comedies as well. Mental processes and behavior are described exactly enough so that a modern psychiatrist might diagnose their symptoms with a fair degree of precision. We need only think about King Lear, and Lady Macbeth, and Ophelia, and Hamlet, about what they did and said and how other people in the plays responded to them—how, in short, they were *treated*, in both the ordinary and the medical sense of the word—to discover that our capsule history of psychiatry won't do. History is both more complicated and more interesting than that historical sediment that settles into received myths and collective fictions. The familiar texts, looked at without preconceptions, will give us, if possible, even greater respect for the wisdom, breadth, sophistication, and humanity of our forefathers, and leave us with even less respect for our own self-congratulatory oversimplifications. What we know—not as specialists or scholars, but as ordinary readers and playgoers—about Shakespeare's most famous characters is only a beachhead on the immense continent of the history of Renaissance psychology and medicine, but it is one we hold securely, and we can explore it with no more special knowledge than we already possess.

All four of Shakespeare's major tragedies present abnormal psychological states, and madness—actual mental illness—is an issue in three of them. Yet nobody, at any time, anywhere in *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, or *King*

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Lear so much as hints that any of the famous sufferers from a mind diseas'd is possessed by a demon. Such treatments as they receive are clearly medical in nature, prescribed and administered by physicians, and conceptually closely akin to treatments administered today. To confirm this, we need only reread the plays. Only in the context of psychiatric pseudo-history could anything so obvious need underlining.

Consider Lady Macbeth. We all know that it is she who will crack, but the first audiences must have been astonished. For both before the murder and after, it is Lady Macbeth who is practical, matter-of-fact, controlled, while it is Macbeth who experiences what he is doing so deeply that he seems on the edge of breakdown. When, after he has murdered Duncan, he looks at his bloody hands and says, "This is a sorry sight," she briskly answers, "A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight." When he speaks—surely not literally—of hearing a voice cry out that he has murdered sleep, her reaction is coolly obtuse. Hearing voices? "What do you mean?" she says. "Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy thane, / You do unbend your noble strength to think / So brainsickly of things." *Brainsickly*—the word itself refutes the demonists, with the vocabulary of illness, moreover, of illness with a physiological base in the brain. It is Macbeth who acknowledges "the torture of the mind" and the "terrible dreams / That shake us nightly." His wife tells him that "things without remedy should be without regard," and calmly explains his horrified reaction to the ghost of Banquo in strictly medical terms.

We should note that although hallucinations, auditory or visual ("Is this a dagger that I see before me?"), were then as now recognized as psychiatric symptoms, seeing a ghost is not a sign of madness in the terms set by the play, any more than it is in *Hamlet*, where the ghost is visible to the soldiers and Horatio before it is to the prince. Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost; he doesn't just think he sees it. We see it too; *Enter the Ghost of Banquo and sits in Macbeth's place.* But Lady Macbeth *does not* see it, and she must explain her husband's behavior not only to the assembled thanes, but to herself. Macbeth has just addressed what appears to all of them as the empty air:

> Thou canst not say I did it. Never shake
> Thy gory locks at me.

When a tactful courtier says, "Gentlemen rise. His Highness is not well," Lady Macbeth intervenes with,

> Sit, worthy friends. My lord is often thus
> And hath been from his youth. Pray you keep seat,
> The fit is momentary, upon a thought
> He will again be well.

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She presents his condition, in fact, as an epileptic fit—epilepsy being an illness well known since ancient times. Ignore it, she adds; paying attention to it will only prolong it. But since she is perfectly aware that he has *not* been subject to seizures from his youth, she needs a second explanation that she herself can find satisfactory. Again, it is a perfectly natural one: illusion caused by fear and emotional stress. It "might appall the Devil," says Macbeth; she answers, "Oh, proper stuff!"

> This is the very painting of your fear.
> This is the air-drawn dagger which you said
> Led you to Duncan.

She tells him to be a man and pull himself together, which he does do—since he is not crazy—as soon as the ghost leaves. He even has the presence of mind to pick up her cover story and reinforce it, telling the guests of his "strange infirmity, which is nothing to those that know me." At the end of the disastrous evening, as they go out together, his wife suggests to him the final medical explanation—he has not been getting enough sleep, "the season of all nature"—which, of course, with the kind of dreams he has been having, is perfectly true. Insomnia is still a commonly noted precursor of psychiatric illness.

But of course it is not Macbeth who is going to be the patient. It is Lady Macbeth, though Macbeth seemed again and again so much closer to breaking. We may find Shakespeare's implicit explanation in what Malcolm says to Macduff, when Macduff gets the news of the massacre of his family and covers his face without speaking:

> What, man! Ne'er pull your hat upon your brows.
> Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak
> Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break.

It is one more manifest of Shakespeare's human and psychological insight that, unlike her sensitive husband, Lady Macbeth gives words neither to sorrow nor to guilt until—well, she does not go mad, although it is easy to assume she does. She would indeed be mad if she said while awake such things as she says while walking in her sleep. But the responses of her gentlewoman and her doctor make clear that, although she needs "light continually by her" even by day, she lets slip no such revelations in her waking state. Only in sleep does this cool and unimaginative woman lose control of the thoughts she has so effectively suppressed.

Well before we see her, we see the doctor who has been called to attend to her. He is a true professional; he wishes to establish the actual symptoms. "Besides her walking and other actual performances, what, at

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any time, have you heard her say?" Her gentlewoman will not repeat it, since, of course, it is highly incriminating. The doctor reminds the attendant of medical confidentiality, established since fifth-century Greece in the Hippocratic oath: "You may to me, and 'tis most meet you should." But in a moment he hears for himself, and like a careful shrink immediately begins to take notes, "to satisfy my remembrance more strongly."

Later Macbeth asks him how his patient is doing, using just that word—*patient*. His agonized question prefigures our modern hopes that psychiatry can work miracles:

> Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
> And with some sweet oblivious antidote
> Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart?

Macbeth is appealing for the application of the medical model to a mind diseas'd. He wants the doctor to accord his wife the "sick role," which confers diminished responsibility and which can only be bestowed by a physician. Moreover, sickness may be cured; that is the doctor's job. "Cure her of that," he demands. "Disease," "cure"—that is the vocabulary of medicine.

The doctor, however, demurs. Though he has earlier told the gentlewoman that "this disease is beyond my practice," by this time he is less sure of the word; she is "not so much sick, my lord, / As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies / That keep her from her rest." The physician is reluctant to trespass on the border regions of human responsibility. He has heard Lady Macbeth "speak what she should not," though he can scarcely say so to Macbeth. It is not the physician's function to erase the troubles written in the brain by murder. Nor are guilt-caused nightmares and somnambulism madness; the doctor is a courageous man, and with the authority of his profession, he tells Macbeth, "Thereto the patient / Must minister to himself." *Patient* is Macbeth's own word, the one he wants to hear, the one the very presence of the doctor establishes. The doctor will use it, but this sickness is spiritual, and he knows that for matters of conscience his skills are irrelevant. He has already told the gentlewoman, "More needs she the divine than the physician"—not, as we might hastily assume, for exorcism, though religious rituals existed (and exist) for the casting out of spirits, but for confession and repentance. The drugs that will help King Lear are useless here; no sweet oblivious antidote can cleanse this bosom. Macbeth has failed of what he wanted: "Throw physic to the dogs, I'll none of it."

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The prominence given to naturalistic explanation (which, of course, includes the workings of guilt) is particularly striking in this play. Lear may be more sinned against than sinning, but no one will say that of Lady Macbeth. If there was ever a case where it would have been appropriate to attribute emotional disturbance to demonic possession, it is here, where the whole action has been precipitated by the powers of darkness. But *Shakespeare does not do it.* It was left to a dramatist of our own tormented era, so much less sure of its own rationality, to do what Shakespeare chose not to do, and assimilate Lady Macbeth to the witches. Charles Marowitz, in his modernized version *A Macbeth,* makes a striking effect and a striking point by giving Lady Macbeth Hecate's lines to speak, thus making her Queen of Hell as well as of Scotland. But his point is not Shakespeare's. The pathology that Shakespeare has created for Lady Macbeth is psychologically wholly probable. Everything she says, though it exhibits the fragmentation and irrationality of sleep, refers clearly to what she has literally experienced, and if she says, "Hell is murky," she has good reason. Shakespeare can horrify us with the horrors of our own nature. But while he may allude to the bizarre and the grotesque, and use it to catch his audience's interest, he never luxuriates in it himself. Like Homer and Tolstoy, we can count on him, when faced with horror, to see it, and ask us to see it, in the light that is most reasonable, most decent, most humane.

Hamlet and Ophelia are conceived equally naturalistically; it goes without saying that they are not possessed. It is unnecessary to add to the thousands of pages already extant on the subject of his problematic and her indubitable madness, especially since neither becomes a patient. Though Macbeth summons a doctor to his castle, Shakespeare has dramatic, and Claudius human, reasons for not introducing one into Elsinore. Note, however, that Claudius's prescription for Hamlet, a trip to England, though its purpose is hardly hygienic, would seem a natural treatment to everyone at court, since travel, especially sea voyages, had been a recognized therapy for madness since the Greek physician Soranus prescribed them in the second century B.C. The Renaissance doctor would find Hamlet's character type equally familiar. The melancholy man, wrote Timothy Bright in *A Treatise of Melancholy,* is "witty," "excels others," has "dreadful dreams." Above all, though such men think of death "as a terrible thing . . . , notwithstanding, they often desire it . . . eagerly," to the point where it is hard to prevent them from destroying themselves. Bright's description preceded Shakespeare's by fifteen years; otherwise, we might take it for a thumbnail sketch of the brilliant prince who, except for his dreams, could think himself king of infinite space and who longed for his flesh to melt away.

Cordelia gives the unforgettable picture of King Lear:

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> . . . mad as the vex'd sea, singing aloud,
> Crowned with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,
> With hardocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,
> Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
> In our sustaining corn.

In its central paradox it is an emblem of madness, beautiful, yet deviant—the wild garland, various and lovely, yet recognized nevertheless as idle weeds among the necessary, cultivated uniformity of the sustaining corn. Here, as so often, Shakespeare gives everything its due value and proportion. We are about to meet Lear, raving mad; to live through—*burn* through, said Keats—the great scene with Gloucester, in which the king rises to a level of insight into "how the world goes" that he never reached in eighty years of sanity.

> Plate sins with gold,
> And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
> Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.

"Reason in madness," as Edgar says, weeping. Edgar weeps, as Cordelia does—for Shakespeare never tips over into the merciless romanticism purveyed by R. D. Laing, who tells a public all too vulnerable to romanticism that "schizophrenia is a reasonable response to an unreasonable world," and that, in a mad world, the schizophrenic alone is sane. It is true that once wrenched out of his normal world Lear sees with new eyes and speaks truths he never knew. Yet however lovely the cuckoo flowers, however searing the mad king's vision, we must at last rely on the sustaining corn that gives us our daily bread. So Cordelia asks what everyone who loves a real mentally ill person (and not a romantic abstraction) must ask, and she asks a doctor:

> What can man's wisdom
> In the restoring his bereaved sense?
> He that helps him take all my outward worth.

The doctor answers reassuringly, prescribing drugs and rest—what most psychiatrists today would prescribe for an acute schizophrenic reaction in a previously well-functioning individual—exactly that class of patients, as Shakespeare's doctor knows, for which the prognosis is most favorable. "There is means," he tells her—"many simples operative" to provoke "repose, the foster-nurse of nature." Cordelia answers:

> All blest secrets,
> All you unpublish'd virtues of the earth,
> Spring with my tears! be aidant and remediate
> In this good man's distress.

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And the simples do remediate, along with music, which from the time of Hippocrates—and Saul—had been prescribed to temper "the untun'd and jarring senses" into harmony again. "Louder the music there!" calls the doctor, and Lear wakes, himself again, though it takes him a little time to know it. There is, of course, no suggestion that his illness has been caused by any supernatural agent, by anything but overwhelming emotional and physical stress—the tempest in his mind and the tempest on the heath. Certainly there is no suggestion that his recovery is not to be welcomed, that the awakening of the insane is, as Michel Foucault sees it in *Madness and Civilization*, an "authoritarian intervention" into the madman's "dark freedom."

Throughout, Shakespeare takes a medical model for granted. Lear's poignant outcry, "Keep me in temper, I would not be mad!" directly reflects the contemporary etiology of mental pathology. Though Lear is an irascible man, that "temper" is not anger but its opposite, the tempering, the equable mixing, the Galenic *krasis* of the body's elements that maintains the balance of the temperate soul, its *equanimity*. The benign and competent doctor, when he is ready to wake the old king, "doubt[s] not of his *temperance*."

But what about Tom-o-Bedlam? "The foul fiend follows me," he says, poor Tom, "whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame, through ford and whirlpool. . . . Peace, thou fiend! . . . The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman." And later, "Five fiends have been in poor Tom at once: of lust, as Obidicut; Hobbididence, prince of dumbness; Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder; Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing." At length the fiend is actually described. The crazed beggar has led the Duke of Gloucester, as he thinks, to the cliffs of Dover; Gloucester, blind and suicidal, is led to believe he has cast himself over and—miraculously—escaped unharmed. He is asked then:

> Upon the crown o' the cliff what thing was that
> Which parted from you?

Gloucester, for all the talk of fiends, answers reasonably and with sympathy: "A poor, unfortunate beggar." His interlocutor, whom he does not yet know, creates for his father's blind sockets the complete picture of a devil, eyes like full moons, a thousand noses, "horns welk'd and waved like the enridged sea." Gloucester replies,

> That thing you speak of,
> I took it for a man. Often 'twould say
> "The fiend, the fiend"—he led me to that place.

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We could not have a better example of a madman, demon and all, every possible received idea included.

Of course. Because this Tom-o-Bedlam, as we know, though easily forget, is not a madman at all. He is Gloucester's son Edgar in disguise. Edgar has put together every cliché of madness to make his persona convincing to his father, who has already been shown to be an unusually credulous and suggestible old man, finding portents in eclipses and ready in a moment to believe his loyal son is out to kill him. Edgar does convince his father. But he should not convince us that he is anything more than the idea of a madman, expressly concocted to appeal to the naivest superstitions of Gloucester—and the audience in the pit.

Shakespeare is fully conversant with the idea of possession (he worked up the names of Edgar's foul fiends from a recently published book). He is equally aware of treatments of mental illness far less benign than those prescribed by Lear's physician, treatments in which "they must" (as Rosalind says jokingly in *As You Like It* and as is actually done in *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night*) "be bound and laid in some dark room." But such etiology and such treatment Shakespeare situates firmly in a context of superstition and bad faith. When, in *The Comedy of Errors*, "Doctor" Pinch (no physician, but a schoolmaster) charges Satan to come forth from Antipholus of Ephesus and commands the darkness treatment, the audience, who knows Antipholus is sane, is called upon to agree that Pinch is a "doting wizard." (The Abbess will later explain the supposed madness sensibly and naturalistically.) When Sir Toby and the Clown, in *Twelfth Night*, shut up Malvolio in the dark house and try to make him believe that he is vexed with a "hyperbolical fiend," even a groundling cannot take seriously their appeals to popular superstition. The interview between Malvolio and Feste, falsely masquerading as a priestly exorcist, represents, as the nineteenth-century psychiatrist J. C. Bucknill remarked in *The Mad Folk of Shakespeare* (1867), "a caricature of the idea that madness is occasioned by demonic possession."

Clearly, that idea was common enough; so far the pseudo-historians are right. James I, at whose command *Macbeth* may well have been produced, would not have been in the least surprised to see Lady Macbeth's symptoms attributed to a devil. He might even have taken it as an authorial compliment, since he himself had written a *Daemonology* and called for greater public vigilance against witchcraft. The Bible itself left no room for doubt. In the story of the Gadarene swine (Mark 5:1–20), the unclean spirit tells Jesus, "My name is Legion; for we are many." In Shakespeare's time, the Prince of Darkness is no gentleman, no urbane Mephisto for an eighteenth-century skeptic. Still less is he a metaphor. His power is a deadly serious reality—deadly in the old sense of bringing death. For many people it still is. An evil spirit was cast out in

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my town, while I was writing this, not a mile from my desk—and like King Saul's, it did not stay cast out.

When salvation and damnation are ultimate realities and devils are known to be legion, they must be taken seriously. Those who tortured old women to confess witchcraft and then burned them did not act out of simple cruelty. Confession and punishment in the here and now might save a soul in the hereafter. No believing Christian, Catholic or Protestant, could deny the power of Satan and his hosts. It is no wonder that Sir Thomas Browne, in his tolerant and charitable account of "a doctor's religion," wrote in 1635, "I have ever believed and do now know, that there are Witches: they that doubt of these [note that people do doubt, in the age of Bacon and Galileo] do not only deny *them*, but Spirits; and are obliquely and upon consequence a sort not of Infidels, but Atheists." In Christian Europe there was ample reason, even without cases like that reported by Burton, to agree with Doctors Wierus, Skenkius, and Scribanius that mental (and physical) illness could be caused by demonic possession.

Why, then, was Shakespeare able to perceive madness so astutely? Was it that he was particularly large-minded—as of course he was. That he was ahead of his time? That, it seems, he was not. What was it, then, that tempered the religiously sanctioned, indeed scripturally mandated, belief in possession, so that for the sensible, reasonable mind it was not the primary, evident explanation for mental illness, but the explanation turned to last, to explain the inexplicable after everything else had been ruled out? As Burton wrote: "They could do no good on her with physic, but left her to the Clergy."

Let us hope that Beth Israel's neurologist was misquoted, that he never told *Harvard*'s reporter that "the first scientific inkling that there might be any relationship between [mental] aberrations and brain disorder was Alzheimer's [1906] report." For two hundred and fifty years before Shakespeare doctors had been anatomizing the brain—the brains of humans. (The great Greek physician Galen, in the second century A.D., had only dissected animals.) Even before the Renaissance brought the rediscovered Greek medical texts to the West, the philosophers and physicians of the Middle Ages had had Aristotle to set beside the Scriptures. Living in the heyday of Hippocratic medicine, Aristotle took a disease model of mental illness for granted, as in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1149:7), when he speaks of "those who lose their reason from some disease, as epileptics (*epileptikas*) or the insane (*manias nosematodeis*)." That way of thinking was never lost. In Shakespeare's time there was Galen (whose heavy volume is visible onstage in Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*), as well as recent medical texts. Doctors opened the brain, examined its fluids, mapped its ventricles, and discussed

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which part of the brain governed which faculty of the mind. These medical texts regularly contained sections on diseases of the head (*de morbis capitis*)—that is, mental illnesses. These were regularly attributed to disorders of brain function and to faulty body metabolism—imbalances among the elements of the body (hot, cold, moist, and dry) and the four humors (blood, black bile, yellow bile, and phlegm). It is, of course, from the Greek for black bile—*melaina cholē*—that the word *melancholy* comes. Hamlet—with Dürer's Melancholia—is its definitive Renaissance image.

Renaissance medical texts are heavy and long and in Latin, mostly untranslated. They are hard to find and no more fun to read than medical textbooks today. *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is much more entertaining—a pop psychology book that went through six editions in sixteen years, each with enthralling new material. Also full of excitement is the *Malleus Maleficarum*, or "Hammer of Witches," by which two superstitious Dominican monks mobilized the sixteenth century against witches. It is not surprising that a psychoanalyst who decided to brush up his Latin and look into the history of mental illness could not get his mind off demons, witches, and the Inquisition.

But even Burton, who was a minister, not a doctor, and who repeated some of the most lurid tales of demonic possession, devoted four times as much space to the natural causes of mental illness as he did to the supernatural. In discussing the causes of melancholy—which term, as used in the Renaissance, has a much broader meaning than simple *depression*, taking in most of what we call mental illness—Burton leads his list of causes with God, as is appropriate for a divine. Then comes "A Digression of the Nature of Spirits, bad Angels or Devils, and how they cause Melancholy." Next comes "Of Witches and Magicians," and how they cause it. Nevertheless, "how far the power of spirits and devils doth extend," remarks Burton, "and *whether they can cause this or any other disease*" (emphasis added), "is a serious question, and worthy to be considered."

Even in this section, Burton pays his tribute to rational medicine: he agrees that the devils must work *through* the humors—that is, by physiological means. It is a mechanism of which Hamlet, with his university training, is fully aware as he reflects that the ghost "may be the devil," who abuses him to damn him, not directly, but "out of my weakness and my melancholy, / As he is very potent with such spirits." He uses the word *spirit* here not as a synonym for *ghost*, but in the sense universal in sixteenth-century medicine, of vapors, rarefied yet material, which course through the body and link it with the soul. So Donne in "The Ecstasie" explains:

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> . . . our blood labours to beget
> Spirits, as like souls as it can,
> Because such fingers need, to knit
> That subtle knot which makes us man.

Once Burton has delivered himself of our story of the vanishing tapeworm, he gets down to the natural causes of melancholy: the stars; old age; parents, by which he means, not what modern psychiatrists do, but "hereditary disease" and the transmission of the emotional *temperament* from parent to child. Melancholy can be caused by bad diet; constipation, bad air; idleness; passions and perturbations of the mind; envy, malice, hatred; emulation or desire for revenge (Hamlet!); anger; discontents, cares, miseries; love of gaming and immoderate pleasures; self-love, pride, overmuch joy and the like; and (a very important cause) too much study. Accidental—we would say environmental—causes include bad nurses (via the milk); bad upbringing in home and school (a relatively minor cause); terrors and affrights; scoffs, calumnies, bitter jests; and a few sociological causes, including poverty, a popular cause today.

Yet Burton was far more open to the idea of supernatural causes than the average Renaissance physician. In 1593, the Jesuit Delrio felt called upon to counter the effect of a book written by Dr. Johann Weyer (the same Wierus cited by Burton). "Wierus hereticus" had found the *Malleus maleficarum* "full of silly and often godless absurdities"; he had denied that "the childish old hags whom one calls witches . . . can cause any harm to men or animals"; he had said they needed no punishment, since "their illness itself is a sufficient pain." "If doctors were to express their opinions," complained Delrio, "no one would be burned."

Yet to oppose enlightened physicians to a simpleminded and superstitious clergy would be to substitute one oversimplification for another. The sixteenth-century preoccupation with demonic possession and the persecution of witches was, in fact, a kind of aberration for the Church, as shown by its very late appearance. Christian doctrine from its beginnings had richly woven together Greek rationalism and Christian grace, the two strands of the Western heritage. Faith and natural reason were seen as complementary, not conflicting. *Sic enim fides praesupponit cognitionem naturalem;* "Faith," says Aquinas, "presupposes natural reason." It was as a Christian that Dr. Weyer criticized *The Hammer of Witches.* It is true that his book was put on the Index of Prohibited Books. But it was also republished within a year with a congratulatory letter from a Benedictine abbot. There was ample Christian precedent for using your mind, and only the credulous and superstitious confused faith with credulity and superstition.

What, then, was the source of this tradition of natural causes and

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humane treatment? The received wisdom does know that. Long ago, before Christianity ushered in the Dark Ages, there was Hippocrates, the father of medicine, and he knew what he was about. We need only fill in: the influence of Hippocratic medicine never died out, but was passed on by Galen and Arab physicians, available through Aristotle even to the Middle Ages; rediscovered and extended in the Renaissance, it continued to provide a model for how to think about the mysterious and frightening phenomena of mental illness.

Of course it was only a model. Mental illnesses are still mysterious, and there is, if anything, less agreement within the psychiatric profession about etiologies than there was four hundred years ago. The legacy of Greek medicine, as of Greek natural philosophy, was not the explanations themselves—the four humors have gone to join the demons. It was the idea, the *model* of what a medical explanation should be, and the confidence that one existed and could be found, and when found would determine treatment.

So what did the boy that Jesus cured suffer from? Luke and Mark are a far cry from the Hippocratic writings, but, even so, the symptoms are clear enough for diagnosis: a condition existing from childhood; sudden, intermittent seizures; foaming at the mouth and gnashing of teeth. It is epilepsy, "the falling sickness"—the oldest of psychiatric diagnoses.

And in fifth-century Greece, too, there were people to ascribe this disorder to supernatural causes, to call it "the sacred disease," to ascribe it to the jealousy or anger of the gods—although the Greeks were mercifully free from the idea of a devil who took possession of human beings for evil. A Greek physician, perhaps Hippocrates himself, addresses such folk. He wrote toward the end of the fifth century, very close to the time when Sophocles and Euripides were writing their tragedies of heaven-sent madness. Euripides, of course, did not really think madness was heaven-sent. He could only be revolted by the idea of divinities who sent such afflictions; he makes that bitterly clear. We can be sure he was aware of the Hippocratic writings; as Werner Jaeger has shown (in *Paideia*, vol. 3), medicine, its theory and practice, was one of the strongest intellectual influences in the Athens of Euripides and Socrates. We can see why, reading these words in which a doctor two and a half millennia ago spoke for his profession:

> The disease called sacred . . . appears to me no more divine or sacred than other diseases, but it has a natural cause from which it originates like other diseases. Men regard its nature and causes as divine from ignorance and wonder, because it is not at all like other diseases. And this notion of its divinity is kept up by their inability to comprehend it. . . . Those who first referred this malady to the gods appear to me to have been just such persons as the conjurors, purificators, mountebanks, and charlatans now are. . . . Such persons . . . using the divinity as

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a pretext and screen of their own inability to afford any assistance, have given out that the disease is sacred. . . .

Men ought to know that from nothing else but the brain come joys, delights, laughter and sports, and sorrows, griefs, despondency, and lamentations. And by this . . . we acquire wisdom and knowledge, and see and hear, and know what are foul and what are fair . . . and by the same organ we become mad and delirious, and fears and terrors assail us, some by night, and some by day, and dreams and untimely wanderings, and cares that are not suitable, and ignorance of present circumstances, desuetude, and unskillfulness. All these things we endure from the brain. . . . So that there is no necessity for making a distinction and holding this disease to be more divine than the others, but all are divine, and all are human.

It is no great leap to the Renaissance doctor Paracelsus:

The insane and the sick man are our brothers, let us give them treatment to cure them, for nobody knows whom among our friends or relatives this misfortune may strike.

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Lifestyles of the Rich and Tyrannical

JUDITH L. GOLDSTEIN

THE WEDNESDAY *New York Times*'s "Metropolitan Diary" is a column composed of amusing anecdotes about life in New York City, usually overheard conversations, passed on to the newspaper's readers by eavesdroppers. The column also happens to be a treasury of tales about conspicuous consumption in urban America. A particularly illuminating story is the following: Two women were going through the exhibition, "Liechtenstein: The Princely Collections," at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The first woman pointed out a silver samovar to her companion. "Beautiful, isn't it?" she said. "Where would I put it?" replied the second woman. To look is to shop, the anecdote seems to say; we can no longer conceive of a disinterested looking, a looking unconnected with potential acquisition. Looking is a metaphor for shopping and shopping a metaphor for looking. The answer to "Where would I put it?" in this instance is, "In a palace."

It is the presumed ordinariness of the women involved that makes their merging of art appreciation and window-shopping presumptuous. But what if they were royalty; or, what if one of them were the richest woman in the world? Would there be any activity that couldn't be understood as shopping, any object she couldn't acquire or, at least, copy? And, in her world, could there be any acquiring or any acquisition that could be considered apart from power—the power to buy things, the power to buy political support, the power to buy personal loyalty, the power, in fact, to begin to change the definition of commodities in the marketplace and the marketplace itself?

I am going to consider the recent disclosures about the spending habits of the wives of the dictators of the Philippines and Haiti, Imelda Marcos and, to a lesser extent, Michèle Duvalier, and in so doing I am going to be referring to press coverage of their shopping sprees. What I

JUDITH L. GOLDSTEIN, associate professor of anthropology at Vassar College, has done fieldwork in Iran and Israel and has published articles on the cultural construction of religious, sexual, and ethnic identity. She is currently at work on the subject of the social meaning of personal possessions in the United States and France.

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find interesting is that the press coverage has, in fact, not asked the questions I have just posed. Journalists have judged Imelda and Michèle, as they are often called, and found them wanting in good sense and good taste, but, surprisingly, they have not asked more probing questions about women and power. The news stories have perpetuated myths about the differences in the luxury spending of men and women, and have spun a morality tale not just about the indulgent spending of dictators' wives, but about the irrationality of the female consumer more generally. By not asking about the power bases that Imelda Marcos and Michèle Duvalier were perhaps building with money, by not asking broader questions about the way dictators try to legitimize themselves through acquisition, the press reports have removed the spending of the two women from its important political and historical contexts. In so doing, they have left us with a constructed world in which conspicuous consumption in modern societies, and perhaps even the desire for any material goods at all, can best be understood through a detailed understanding of women's compulsion to consume. The reports uneasily want to have it both ways; they want to single out Imelda Marcos and Michèle Duvalier as having fallen into some kind of consumer madness, but they also want to draw us in, to have us recognize that we, too, in our small ways, do the same kind of buying these women do, and that, there but for a fortune go you or I.

The press ran a two-part morality play about consumption. The first part was about the meaning of consumption, particularly feminine consumption, and the second part involved the judgment that the Filipino and Haitian regimes were illegitimate, with that judgment based almost exclusively on the conspicuous consumption of the dictators' wives. A commentator in the *New Republic* wrote that Baby Doc Duvalier "made the mistake of marrying a beautiful woman of cosmopolitan tastes and extravagant habits, a Marie Antoinette," and suggested that "historians should rewrite their theories of revolution to take into account the spouse as well as the ruler." No doubt, but theories of revolution were just as conspicuously absent from daily press coverage. I will now address the topic of women—both dictators' wives and otherwise—and consumption, and, in doing so, examine why dictators find it so hard to realize their power, to legitimize themselves, in material objects.

In many ruling dynasties, a clear distinction has been made between what must be passed on, and what can be kept or destroyed. In ancient Hawaii, when a king died, his feather cape and other regalia were passed on to the next ruler, while his personal effects, no matter how valuable, were declared "tabu," polluted by his death, and hence destroyed. That which must be passed on belongs, ultimately, to the group, to the office,

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to history—and not to any one ruler. Crown jewels are an example of a collective inheritance, of something that belongs to a dynasty, and is but used by an individual.

To my everlasting regret, I missed seeing the Crown Jewels when I was in Teheran. They were kept (and I assume are still kept) in a vault, which could be visited by the public, on Firdausi Street, a street I was on dozens of times. Firdausi Street was lined with carpet stores and antique shops. If you continued south on it long enough, you would reach the bazaar, passing two tourist attractions, the Crown Jewels and the *zurxaneh*, or strong house, a devotional athletic club in which men lift weights to the beat provided by religious chanting. I generally stayed north, where the antique shops were, spending most of my time in one shop that had everything: pre-Islamic pottery and glass, carpets, Qajar glass paintings, carved wooden windows, old silk clothing, Persian shawls and jewelry. I would drink tea, talk to the proprietors, and watch peddlers unwrap cloth bundles of things to sell: silver coins, Turkoman leggings, small clay objects dug up while ploughing the fields. I found everything in the shop beautiful, and so I never got to the Crown Jewels, which were, of course, very valuable, but, oddly enough, not spoken of as beautiful.

There are descriptions of the Crown Jewels in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century travel literature on Iran. In this literature, judgments similar to those made in the press about the Malacanang Palace (in Manila) decorations can be found. The bad taste, and what seems to offend even more, the mixture of good and bad taste, is a prominent theme, but whereas bad taste delegitimizes the Marcoses, proving they are not royal, it did not delegitimize the shahs. To begin to address why this is so, let us examine a rather long excerpt from the Englishwoman Gertrude Bell's description of the Crown Jewels, written in the early part of this century when the Qajars ruled.

> Between the house of riches and of penury there is but a breath. We were accustomed to strange contrasts, yet it scarcely seemed possible that this gaudy squalor could be the setting of the priceless Treasure of the King. . . . We stopped before an unregal gateway, and were conducted with much ceremony into the palace. . . . What sober mortal could be prepared for the sight that burst upon us? A great vaulted room with polished floor and painted walls, with deep alcoves through whose long narrow windows splashes of sunlight fell—and everywhere jewels! . . . With dazzled eyes we turned to one of the alcoves. . . . Here were diamond crowns, worthy to throw a halo of light round the head of an emperor; breastplates and epaulets, from whose encrusted emeralds the spear of the enemy would glance aside, shields whose bewildering splendour would blind his eyes. Here were rings and bracelets and marvellous necklaces, stars and orders and undreamt-of ornaments. . . . Under glass cases lay the diadems of former kings, high, closed helmets ablaze with precious stones; masses of

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unstrung pearls; costly and hideous toys, remarkable only for their extraordinary value—a globe, for instance, supported by an unbroken column of diamonds, whose seas were made of great flat emeralds, and whose continents of rubies and sapphires; and scattered with lavish profusion among the cases, festoons of turquoise rings and broad gold pieces which have long passed out of use, but in which regal currency, it is related, an immense subsidy was once paid to the Czar. . . . Taking an honoured place among the jewels and the enamel there were some objects which raised a ripple of laughter in the midst of our admiration. The royal owner of the treasure house, doubtless anxious to show that he considered no less the well-being of the inward than the adornment of the outward man, had filled some of his upper shelves with little bottles of . . . yes, indeed they were pills—quack remedies which the Shah had collected on his Western travels, had brought home and placed among his treasures. After this discovery we were not surprised to find bottles of cheap scents and toothpowder among the diamonds, nor to observe that some of the priceless cloisonne bowls were filled with tooth-brushes. (*Persian Pictures*, pp. 89–92)

The visiting Miss Bell then goes on to view the Peacock Throne and to examine the palace rooms.

Execrable copies of the very worst European pictures adorned them; one was hung with framed photographs—groups taken on the Shah's travels, in which his shabby figure occupied a prominent place. . . . Here and there a wonderful carpet lent its soft glow to the rooms, but for the most part the floors were covered with coarse productions of European looms—those flaming roses, and vulgar, staring patterns, which exercise an unfortunate attraction over the debased Oriental taste of to-day. With a feeling of hopeless bewilderment, we at length quitted the palace where we had been dazzled by inconceivable wealth and moved to ridicule by childish folly. (ibid., 93–94)

To return to the Philippines, this description is echoed by today's visitors to Malacanang Palace. In both cases, the visitors are overwhelmed and confused by the mixture of the old and new, the valuable and ordinary—and the evidence of a taste that takes up the worst of the West and devalues the best of the East. But there is one crucial difference. The objects in Iran's Royal Treasury have a history, and are respected for having a history that goes back hundreds of years, whereas the objects in the Malacanang Palace have no significance beyond the here and now. A first-generation dictator has no past and an uncertain future, and the same goes for his objects. When one looks at and describes the royal objects, one is obliged to comment also upon their past. Thus one sees old weapons and armor that recall ancient, no doubt glorious, battles; "stars and orders" that remind the visitor that shahs have been awarding honorary status to their subjects for centuries; "the diadems of former kings"; and obsolete currency that is evidence of agreements made between Persian kings and Russian czars. The grandiose setting of the pills and toothbrushes brought back from Western

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travels is amusing, but one is prepared to believe that the trips on which they were acquired had some sort of international importance, were serious affairs of state—and quite unlike Imelda Marcos's and Michèle Duvalier's shopping expeditions to New York and Paris.

By and large, dictators lack Crown Jewels—that is, objects with a history, with a pedigree—and so they try to build monuments to themselves instead. The recently deposed Shah of Iran, uncertain of his power in a dynasty of only one generation, and Ferdinand Marcos, a man in some sense in business for himself, built statues of themselves, put their pictures on currency, and placed their portraits in every public building and on the front page of every newspaper. When they fell, their statues were pulled down, their pictures clipped out of the bills, and their portraits smashed. People who did this felt that they could destroy the memory of the dictators by destroying the objects associated with them. No one ever defended these statues as art; no one ever declared them part of a patrimony that belonged to the people. One of the most interesting debates in the Philippines currently concerns the disposition, as the *New York Times* put it, of the "countless buildings, landmarks and byways bearing the Marcos name." On one side are those who would destroy the references to Marcos, and with them all vestiges of the Marcos regime, and on the other side are those who would keep them as a "monument to the regal excesses of the Marcoses." The debate has centered around keeping the giant Malacanang Palace, not as an official building, but as a public museum and tourist attraction.

The Marcoses were neither royal nor democratic. Kings and shahs allow access to the Crown Jewels and doubtless assume that the display of wealth, and of the genealogy of both themselves and their objects, contributes to their legitimation. Democratically elected leaders also invite the people to tour the seats of government. But the self-made tyrant, like Marcos, makes private that which should be public. When the palace was first broken into, people remarked that it had never before been open to the public. "Marcos was President for 20 years, but this is the first time I've ever been inside Malacanang. . . . This is truly the day of our liberation," said a Filipino worker who had been unemployed for several months. If the Marcoses had accepted that what they had was, in some sense, equivalent to the Crown Jewels or to the White House and had shared it, they would have been not only more democratic, I would suggest, but also more royal.

If dictators possessed the Crown Jewels, they would not have to buy them. But since they lack an inheritance of objects with pedigrees, they do what other rich people do—they build their own collections. These collections are amassed for their monetary value—they usually take the form of art and antiques—and are often meant to reflect the good taste of

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those who have acquired them. The newspapers have left us descriptions of what we can provisionally call the Marcos collections. In the Manhattan mansion used by the Marcoses for receptions were:

> giant Ming-style vases, Persian carpets, a 1763 harpsichord, gold bathroom fixtures, mother-of-pearl geese, laminated orchids and a trove of other treasures. . . . There was a music room with two grand pianos and a Baker Harris harpsichord. The library contained books said to be original editions of Balzac and Dickens as well as a 1622 volume of the royal Arms of Louis XIV. . . . There were photographs of the Marcos couple with distinguished acquaintances, including Queen Elizabeth II, King Juan Carlos of Spain, Pope John Paul II, Mao and Walter F. Mondale (Marvine Howe, *New York Times*, February 28, 1986).

And in Manila, at the Malacanang Palace:

> As the residence of Mr. Marcos and his wife, Imelda, the redwood-panelled living quarters were a blend of opulence, romanticism and vulgarity. . . . Shelves held gilt-framed pictures of the Marcoses with foreign leaders. On the walls hung romanticized portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Marcos. Antique glass cases were filled with jewels and ornaments, mother-of-pearl boxes, ivory carvings, silver bowls, and a plaster Cupid adorned with pearls and diamonds. Built-in shelves were stuffed with unopened boxes of watches, tape cassette players, clocks and pens, evidently gifts for friends of the Marcoses. There were cardboard crates of milk chocolate, greeting cards and bowls holding rosaries. . . . Walk-in safes [were] filled with crates of jewels and other treasures. . . . Another alcove, mirrored and indirectly lit, was filled with cosmetics and bottles of perfume the size of gasoline canisters. Mrs. Marcos's bed, with a regal canopy, was surrounded by picture books and albums of movie stars, candies, a huge screen and stacks of video cassettes. . . . One floor below, Mrs. Marcos kept her outfits, rack after rack of dresses, nightgowns, furs, pants suits, coats and gowns, like the store rooms of a New York department store. (*New York Times, March 1, 1986)*

The Marcoses collected the art and antiques that met internationally recognized standards of value and taste. They hung Western pictures of repute on their walls, or tried to do so—evidence is accumulating that casts doubt upon the authenticity of much that was sold to them—and not just the copies of third-rate art that the shahs hung in their palaces in the early part of this century. But like the shahs, they mixed with their treasures the odd detritus of the West, such as the music of rock stars, and the occasional example of bad taste, such as the plaster Cupid adorned with real pearls and diamonds. What mediated between the things of generally agreed upon worth and the junk were the name-brand luxury items that form a parallel series with the more traditional, and scarcer, art and antiques. These name-brand luxury items were collected by both Imelda Marcos and Michèle Duvalier. It was the women who

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added conspicuous consumption to their husbands' self-glorifying statuary and to the more recherché pastime of traditional collecting.

The press, using techniques of realism found in some modern short stories and novels, lists the designer names of Imelda Marcos's and Michèle Duvalier's possessions. A woman described as a "Haitian socialite" revealed of Michèle Duvalier, "She would buy truckloads of dresses from Valentino. She had Boucheron, the Paris jeweller, fly to Haiti to sell jewels to her—not $200,000 [worth] but millions, millions." A "friend" of Michèle Duvalier "tells of buying dozens of pairs of $500 Susan Bennis Warren Edwards shoes for Michèle during a shopping foray on Park Avenue" (*People*, March 3, 1986). We are even told of the labels on discarded packaging. After the mobs sacked the Duvalier country home, "All that was left was garbage. But what garbage it was—empty boxes from Saks Fifth Avenue and an envelope from Cartier, a shipping label from Harrods of London marked 'one of twenty lots'" (ibid.). In the Marcos's Manhattan "mansion," reporters found and told us about "many empty jewelry cases and empty boxes bearing the names of Cartier and Van Cleef & Arpels." In Manila, a partial inventory revealed "three thousand pairs of shoes, size 8½. Five shelves of unused Gucci handbags, still stuffed with paper, price tags still attached. Huge bottles of perfume, vats of Christian Dior wrinkle cream" (*Newsweek*, March 24, 1986, p. 34). Seemingly overcome by the beauty and significance of naming things, a *New York Times* reporter even included the fact that, by her bed, Mrs. Marcos kept "a box of bottles of a high-energy drink called Lipovitan" (*New York Times*, March 1, 1986).

Walter Benjamin said that original art lost its "aura" once it could be easily and mechanically reproduced. But the age of mass production substitutes its own kind of value for originality. What the reporters and the dictators' wives seem to share is the belief that expensive name-brand goods have their own aura. In this kind of purchasing, the "best" replaces the "unique." The women achieve the benefits of this aura through purchase; the reporters participate in it by the magical repetition of names.

In purchasing these name-brand luxury goods, Imelda Marcos and Michèle Duvalier also accumulated that which met international standards of taste. But unlike the art they collected, which was destined for museums and guest receptions, these possessions were only meant to be seen when their owners chose to wear them. The dictators made private that which was public, and their deposers later exacted revenge by making public that which was meant to be private.

Both the very rich and the royal amass collections, although many of us also have our individual stores of mementos and souvenirs. The best collections, it is usually assumed, have been acquired through a passion,

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through an almost uncontrollable desire for certain objects (this idea is subsumed in the title of the collector Peggy Guggenheim's book *Confessions of an Art Addict*). What separates the collection from the fetish is that the fetish is private, while the collection is public—or if not public, is at least classified and labeled, making it accessible to others. This classification implies some kind of control, some kind of shared culture rather than private obsession. (More on the relation between the fetish and the collection can be found in Susan Stewart's *On Longing*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, and in James Clifford's "Objects and Selves—An Afterword," in George Stocking's *Objects and Others*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.)

Imelda Marcos's personal belongings became a collection because of circumstances, rather than through self-conscious accumulation and presentation. After the Marcoses fled, her "private" residence became a museum displaying her clothing—her possessions became a collection after the fact. At that point, she could no longer exercise control over her public image; she couldn't emerge with her dignity intact because we became voyeurs and she became a fetishist. The responses she gave interviewers, which seemed so absurdly inadequate—for example, her claim that she had three thousand pairs of shoes because she couldn't bear to throw anything away—can be seen as an attempt to de-fetishize what has become her collection. She was effectively denying that what she left was a collection at all, and she was trying to make herself appear like an ordinary woman. After all, no one would deny that there is an essential difference between collecting and not being able to throw anything away.

In trying to appear ordinary at the same time as the facts of her extraordinary expenditures were made public, Imelda Marcos displayed an ambivalence about herself not unlike that of the press. One report referred to Imelda Marcos as "a seemingly psychopathic buyer" (*People*, April 7, 1986, p. 139). Another story about her expenditure of $4.5 million in New York, between May and July 1983, began as follows: "It was, after all, only a harmless little New York City shopping spree—the kind every woman fantasizes about now and then" (*Time*, March 31, 1986). The cultural ideas that suggest that Imelda Marcos was living out every woman's fantasy are hidden, or perhaps mediated, by the attempt of the press to present Imelda Marcos as the latest incarnation in a historical series of extravagant and powerful women. "After starting her career as a beauty queen on the fleshy fringes of show business, Imelda grew into bigger roles, playing Jackie to her husband's Jack, Bonnie to his Clyde, Evita to his strongman" (*Newsweek*, March 24, 1986, p. 34). A number of journals quoted Representative Stephen Solarz's comment, "Compared to her, Marie Antoinette was a bag lady." These associations

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assume the status of explanations. With the political and historical circumstances left unexamined, what remains is the fearful image of women with too much money and too little sense, voraciously accumulating material goods.

These de-historicized historical allusions were still too specific for *People* magazine, which dubbed Imelda Marcos and Michèle Duvalier "dragon ladies," and ingenuously defined the category as "women who exploit their beauty to marry into power and then use their influence to make that power their own, sometimes eclipsing their husbands," thus obscuring the fact that the term has been used exclusively for Asian women, and, through their very general definition, cleansing the term of the fear it holds. Evil dragons and dragon ladies imply their virtuous opposites, usually Western, civilized, Christian beings. Familiar images include St. George killing the dragon, the man on a horse conquering a beast that is neither culture nor nature, and the heavily made-up Oriental woman of popular fiction and film who, like the dragon, is neither culture nor nature.

Imelda Marcos's significant other, or reverse type, is Cory Aquino. She, as Imelda Marcos told one crowd, "doesn't use make-up; she doesn't do her nails." Aquino conquered an Asian dictatorship with Western democracy and religious education. The wife of a man who was killed returning to his people, she was referred to as La Madonne by some French journals and as Joan of Arc by an American fashion magazine. A recent cover of *Paris Match* showed her cradling an infant (her grandson) in her arms. Dressed always in yellow, she appears, far from a mere consumer, to have transcended the gross desire for goods that drove Imelda Marcos.

Imelda Marcos made Cory Aquino look all good; Cory Aquino made Imelda Marcos look all bad. The complex of contradictory characteristics, which someone such as Eva Peron was thought to embody in herself, was neatly divided between the two women. The news analysts seemed paralyzed by the historically unique instance of two powerful women succeeding each other. But they were perhaps only temporarily stuck. A recent *New York Times* front-page article described the confusion Cory Aquino is sowing as the result of her being too "aggressive" on the one hand and displaying too "demure a demeanor" on the other.

People magazine distorted the definition of *dragon ladies* by effectively denying the term's Asian referent. There is an unintentional irony, too, in the second part of *People*'s definition, which states that the women take power, "sometimes eclipsing their husbands." The news coverage, centered as it was on the women, did make them eclipse their husbands, which had the effect of partially whitewashing these political

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leaders. The women's spending was grotesque, and profoundly immoral against the background of poverty in their countries. But the spending was, after all, the symbol of corruption, not its source. Ferdinand Marcos was a dictator for twenty years. He appointed his wife governor of Metro Manila and put her in charge of a fund with $200 million (non-accountable) a year. Yet this was not an isolated misuse of the nation's wealth; nor need it be understood as the result of the wiles of a beautiful woman. "The Construction and Development Corporation of the Philippines, which was entrusted to a golfing crony named Rodolfo Cuenca, borrowed more than 70 percent of the net worth of the Philippine National Bank and ran up government-guaranteed loans and debts in excess of one billion dollars—a sum . . . that was then equal to 27 percent of the nation's money supply," wrote Arthur Zich in the *National Geographic*. Ferdinand Marcos was a dictator and Imelda Marcos was a dictator's wife who had dictatorial power.

Imelda Marcos appeared unworthy to reign because of her humble past, her bad taste, and her excessive buying. She bought so much that she made it clear she intended to leave nothing behind. But what particularly interests me in the news coverage of her shopping sprees is the suggestion that her spending hurt not just the Filipino nation, but threatened the Western marketplace as well. What is one to make of the use of words such as *loot*, *pillage*, and *strip* instead of the word *buy* when her behavior in a store is described?

> Mrs. Marcos spent money on a gargantuan scale. Periodically she would pack a private plane full of blue ladies and fly off to pillage New York, Tokyo, Rome or some other favorite city. . . . [The] former president of the Scribner Book Stores describes how Imelda and her ladies laid waste to his landmark Fifth Avenue shop several years ago. "They landed like locusts," he says. "They spread out all over the store, taking every third copy off the shelves, sometimes every second copy—art books, poetry, classics, travel, history, biography." (*Newsweek*, March 24, 1986)

We know that she paid for her purchases—in fact, we even know that she paid for them "in crisp American currency, each bill freshly ironed by a maid," or, at least, she settled her accounts in Houston that way. So what did she do wrong? Is there some unstated, but nonetheless fundamental, rule of the marketplace that she broke by buying, well—even phrasing it this way seems absurd—by buying more than her share? Another reporter complained that she bought $2,000 worth of chewing gum while in transit in the San Francisco airport. So what? Did she leave nothing behind for others? In the ideal-typical marketplace does it matter *who* buys your stock? The two examples—the books and the gum—seem to illustrate two different violations. Is the problem that the

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owner of the bookstore took pride in his taste, and his taste could only be displayed if he had a relatively complete set of books? Did he also want, perhaps, to be appreciated for his connoisseurship, and fancied his establishment not the kind of place in which you buy books by the yard? What was it that Imelda Marcos misunderstood about buyer-seller relationships?

The example of the chewing gum is a little different. Here she affected not the relation between persons in the marketplace, but the relation between things. In a sense, $2,000 worth of gum changes what gum is—or, dare I say, what gum means. Gum is inexpensive and accessible to almost anyone; $2,000 worth of gum suddenly becomes a luxury item. I suppose it is also possible to say that she cornered the market in gum. She took gum as tribute; she cleaned out the territory and left nothing for the peasants.

Is there a lesson in Imelda Marcos's behavior? It is hard not to see the outlines of the morality play I began with here. Women are prime targets of advertising, and they are primed to consume. At the same time, there seems to be a fear that women's irrationality, when buttressed by an almost unlimited buying capacity, has the ability to overturn the ideal-typical marketplace, which is presented as a rational male preserve. How does the female consumer of unlimited spending power accomplish this? Apparently by exposing the fact that the market is not exactly the rational place it purports to be. Can it be that the seller does not wish simply to sell, and all that is for sale is not for sale?

Proof of the negative view of the very wealthy woman in the marketplace can be seen in a contrasting example of how the media treats male luxury spending. In the middle of the exposure of Imelda Marcos's excesses, the *New York Times* ran an article on the publisher Malcolm Forbes's new yacht, an item that cost well over $5 million. The article ran on the "Style" page. Knowing that *New York Times* journalists had freely used words on the news pages such as *vulgar* and *ostentatious* to describe Imelda Marcos, and seeing that the byline was that of a writer unafraid to be flip, one might have felt justified in settling in for a nice sarcastic account of Mr. Forbes's spending. But the article was close to fawning, and it is instructive to see why Malcolm Forbes's lavish consumption was respected and Imelda Marcos's was not.

When Imelda Marcos, who was after all a politician in her own right, was on the front page, she was judged as if she were on the "Style" page. When Malcolm Forbes is on the "Style" page, he is still treated as if he were in the business section. We are not told that Forbes bought his fifth yacht because he has a compulsion to consume, but are instead informed that it is a necessary adjunct to his business. The headline calls the yacht a "capitalist tool," a reference also to Forbes's magazine. As in the

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description of the Crown Jewels, the listing of Forbes's possessions legitimizes them through granting them an illustrious maritime history. The article lets us know that Forbes's guests eat on dinner plates from the "defunct liner *United States*," and that, as the yacht's designer noted, the yacht serves as a background for "the extraordinary objects Malcolm collects." These objects include "three Art Deco panels from the liner *Normandie*; [and] wooden columns and stained glass from Queen Victoria's yacht." Some rather striking examples of questionable taste, such as the "framed front pages from the day the *Titanic* sank," pass without comment.

The expense and opulence of the yacht seem obvious—the designer points out that most yachts are designed for six to eight people, but that Mr. Forbes wanted his fit for eighty people, and that 140 guests could be easily accommodated—yet there is no hint that this is excessive. The designer says, "There's nothing jazzy, nothing showy," and the journalist approvingly notes that "what does show is quietly lavish and invariably custom-made." Like Imelda Marcos, Malcolm Forbes seemed to have wanted everything. According to the designer, "Malcolm is a great enthusiast. You want to pull out all the stops to satisfy this man." But rather than being judged as greedy, Malcolm Forbes gets complimented for providing the opportunity for science and art to advance under his patronage. He is quoted as saying that his yacht is "a state of the art, infinitely forward looking yacht, totally different from the mahogany and chintz norm." Malcolm Forbes is the aristocratic businessman, improving the marketplace through luxury spending. Imelda Marcos, "accumulat[ing] possessions with a single-minded lust," threatened to leave nothing in the marketplace behind her.

There is even a hint that this carefully decorated yacht will also be Forbes's mausoleum. "This is my last seagoing gurgle," he said. If so, he will have left his own monument behind. Future viewers may criticize the yacht's opulence, but, unlike the tourists at Malacanang Palace, they will not be voyeurs.

Dictators and their wives struggle to achieve legitimacy through accumulating objects, and this attempt connects the statues of dictators with the conspicuous consumption of their wives. Their monuments and possessions, however, can be used against them—can be made to speak with different tongues. One general lesson that emerges is that it is hard to control material objects, and difficult to foresee their fate.

The new government of the Philippines decided in August 1986 to auction off what remained in the Marcos's Manhattan townhouse and to use the money from the sale to hire lawyers to find other wealth the Marcoses have hidden. I went to the auction preview, which was accompanied by a tour of the house. It was fitting that, for the viewers,

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shopping and looking should be so intertwined—for we could bid for anything we saw. After the auction, which brought in more money than was expected, a buyer told a *New York Times* reporter, "I got a piece of history." Apparently history, like political legitimacy, can be literally possessed. The immortality these dictators sought through objects has apparently been realized, although not quite in the way they had expected.

Octavian in Alexandria

W. R. JOHNSON

By her own hand the clever fiend is dead
(So thinks the world, for so the world was told),
And I, polite and smiling, simply dressed,
I saunter down the famous boulevards
Where centuries of Ptolemies have paced
Their purple path to bright oblivion—
The city that they gloried in is mine.

I'll praise, of course, their buildings and their parks,
I'll make a gracious speech in careful Greek,
I'll take a look at Alexander's grave,
And then—I'll have some long and cozy chats
With what is doubtless here my special prize:
Those cunning drones who made her empire work,
Her lowly, faceless, brilliant bureaucrats.

W. R. Johnson teaches Latin and Greek at the University of Chicago. His works include *Darkness Visible, The Idea of Lyric*, and, forthcoming from Cornell University Press, *Momentary Monsters: Lucan and His Heroes.*

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Casting Back

(for my father)

JOSHUA WEINER

Along that silent brook we fish
For trout, finned leopards
Darting stiff and quick upstream
Past human shadows whispering
Too loud. Without a word we part
To separate pools.
Careful not to cast my shape
Into the stream, I tie an Eagle Claw
Number twelve onto my lead
—an improvised all-purpose knot—
And pinching a cricket from my can
Pierce his back, careful not to nail the wings.
You see, he's still alive, can fly
Without my gentle cast.

Eventually with a child's hands
I tangle up my line, the spinning reel
a Tom Fool's knot of unknown
Twisting loops, easily fixed with just
The proper pull, offering
You this winding puzzle, content
To let you tamper having lured you to the task.
Picking up your rod
I clumsily cast its great weight

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Hard into a tree.
You look and shake your head,
Can't believe the son you see.

Those times
I wished that I could die returning
As a fish you'd catch and hold up proud
For photographs. I hoped to set the hook just right
But couldn't sense the trout's light tug.
Your casts were clean, precise, bait
Hanging in air, dropping
Into a distant pool.
Every move implied return,
Reeling in the line to cast
And cast again.

I tried to mimic you, to catch
The whiz, click of your clapping bail—
That tapping, bone on bone,
Calls with a soft hollow knock,
Living like a memory, forever
There yet lost
Beyond my hook, teasing
Me like trout.

✪ JOSHUA WEINER, a recent graduate of Northwestern University, is currently a graduate student in the English department at the University of California, Berkeley.

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REAPPRAISAL

Thoreau the Thorough Impressionist*

JACQUES BARZUN

What follows is in no sense a scholarly study of Thoreau's work. I have read very little about his life and virtually none of the critical literature. My remarks are but the reflections of a devoted reader who first came to Thoreau from spending parts of each summer in Concord, on Nine Acre Corner itself, and getting to know the region and its history. My reading has been enthusiastic, but also critical, and at times hostile, as will appear. There are indeed two parts of equal weight that come together in this mere reader's assessment. By the end of Part One it may seem to an absolute admirer as if the assessor deserved a ducking in Walden Pond. But by the end of Part Two, I may perhaps—it is my hope—qualify for a life membership in the Thoreau Society.

Part One is concerned with Thoreau's writings on man in society and his reputation as thinker. The main works on which this reputation stands are, of course, "Civil Disobedience" and *Walden*, supplemented by innumerable entries in the *Journals*. The influence of Thoreau's "ideas" has been far-reaching; it is in fact worldwide. We know that Tolstoy in the crusade of his last years was (in his own words) "mentally uplifted" by reading Thoreau. Gandhi admired and learned from the teaching of "Civil Disobedience." Directly or indirectly, it was this teaching that was applied during the First World War by the recognition of the conscientious objector, a social species unheard of before. It was legalized again in the Second World War; and the war in Vietnam revived the Thoreauvian spirit of disobedience, both toward bearing arms and toward academic administration. In this last form it has continued to this day, at Dartmouth, at Yale, and elsewhere.

Thoreau has done yet another thing: he has helped create this country's view of itself, as a recent article in *American Heritage* indicated. The title was "Ten Books That Shaped the American Character." The drop line said: "*Walden* is here, of course . . ."—the other nine books had to be explained. Again, not long ago, in a judicial opinion on a case of activism in Ohio, the judge cited "Civil Disobedience" as relevant though without standing as an authority in law. What are, in fact, the intellectual contents of this piece of work that it has wielded such power? My reading of it is that it consists of a series of strong impressions, lucidly expressed but uncoordinated—indeed totally inconsistent. Let me demonstrate.

In his opening words, Thoreau adopts the motto: "That government is best which governs least"—an old and tenable political maxim. From it, our author immediately deduces, illogically: "That government is best which governs not at all." At some point, he prophesies, men will have such a government. Where is all this leading? A few lines later, we find out; the real intention of the essay is stated as if it were an example by the way: a few individuals have brought on the Mexican War, in defiance of the people's will, and it must be stopped.

JACQUES BARZUN, the well-known critic and historian, has published most recently a collection of essays on language, *A Word or Two Before You Go*.

* This essay is drawn from an address at the annual meeting of the Thoreau Society in Concord, on the anniversary of Thoreau's birth, July 12, 1986. The Concord tradition is that the first and third words in the title are pronounced exactly alike.

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Government, it seems, government at large and in the abstract, has imposed itself, for its own advantage, on the people. What we are hearing is an echo of the eighteenth-century idea that kings and priests are the cause of all evils. But suddenly Thoreau says one must be practical. He will not ask for no government, but for a better government, *at once*. This is to be a government which is not ruled by the majority but by conscience. What has happened to the will of the people objecting to the acts of a few individuals? And whose conscience is going to sit at the helm? We are not told. The thinker's state of mind is—shall we say?—childlike. For, says Thoreau, "the only obligation I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right." Here is the ground of all disobedience, from the nursery to Gandhi and Tolstoy. When it succeeds on any scale, it is necessarily government by one man, one conscience; that is, arbitrary rule—as the lives of Tolstoy and Gandhi amply prove.

The contradictions so far are manifest, the evasions of reality also. But they have only begun. Here are some more: undue respect for law, we should know, turns men into machines, which are then moved and worked by some unscrupulous man in power. Therefore great men—heroes and martyrs—resist. All men recognize the right of revolution, and each man must judge for himself when to revolt. But in any case justice must be done, cost what it may. Hence "this people must cease to hold slaves and to make war on Mexico, though it [should] cost them their existence as a people." I follow the principles in sequence, not skipping any. The next one is: The hero is as one to ninety-nine in a hundred; indeed, less than one: "How many *men* are there to a square thousand miles in this country? Hardly one." In that case, one wonders, will the thousands agree to cease existing as a nation, just to let the single hero stop the Mexican War? But reading on, it appears that there are many virtuous and conscientious people; it is they who support the government and thus they are "the most serious obstacles to reform." In short, the one and the many are by turns the good and the bad.

Revolution has been temporarily shelved and the tone suddenly changes to pleading: "Why does not the government anticipate and provide for reform . . . cherish its wise minority?" The reader, who has been asking himself how government manages to act as it were from outside society and to its detriment, now discovers that there is this wise minority whose counsels should prevail, an aristocracy of intellect, no doubt. But where to find it? "The American may be known by his manifest lack of intellect." Here another thought strikes the theorist: "If injustice is a necessary part of the machine of government, let it go . . . ; perhaps it will wear smooth and certainly the machine will wear out." But if *you* have to commit an injustice, don't let it go, "I say, break the law."

By now, the person addressed must be in some confusion: he has been called a fool and a coward; he has been urged to be a martyr and resist at the cost of undoing his country; he is assured that more than ninety-nine will invariably be against him; he is known, as an American, for his lack of intellect; but he should form part of a wise minority and proceed to break the law, so as to arrive at a government that governs not at all.

Meantime, speaking in his role as reformer, Thoreau asserts that it is "not his business to petition the governor and legislature," for if they should not heed, what can he do? This eventuality proves to him that the constitution is the evil; that is the truth, even if saying it "may seem stubborn and unconciliatory." How did our revolutionist turn into this apologetic citizen? Nobody knows. But he gets a grip on himself and repeats that "all change is for the better," no matter what "convulsions" it may bring. And the urge toward martyrdom persists: "under a government that imprisons anyone unjustly, the place of a just man is in prison."

We now see the point of the momentary meekness: it and the prospect of prison make a powerful appeal to the masochism of the world. Passive resistance requires some self-control, but no energy or skill; it can be worked by very small groups, and it looks blameless, as Thoreau points out in suggesting the non-payment of taxes: "it would not be a violent and bloody measure; it would be the definition of a peaceable revolution." In other words, it is the tyranny of the weak, actually so provocative that it often does breed violence. We know this when we call these "passive" moves "activism"—in Gandhi's In-

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dia, the student riots of 1968, and the now established forms of coercion by minorities, the sit-ins, and other modes of obstruction.

Thoreau is not unaware of the dangers. He asks: "Even suppose blood should flow. Is there not a sort of bloodshed when the conscience is wounded?" That piece of verbal trickery is effective rabble-rousing: always climb to a high moral plane when inciting the mob to break the windows. And the mob also responds well to the next moral ploy, the attack on money, on the rich man: "Absolutely speaking," we are told, "the more money, the less virtue."

This is gospel in the literal sense, and it leads to a curious calculation: Thoreau would not like to think that "he ever relies on the protection of the state." Yet if he does not pay his taxes, the state will take what he owns. "This is hard," he exclaims. All you can do is "squat somewhere and raise but a small crop"—in other words, resort to *Waldenizing*. He weighs the choices and decides: until he wants to engage in trade or build a large estate, "I can afford to refuse allegiance to Massachusetts. . . . It costs me less in every sense to incur the penalty of disobedience . . . than it would to obey."

He then cites his own experience of jail for not paying the poll tax. Someone "interfered" and paid it for him. This anonymous defeat did not seem to bother the beneficiary, because, as he proceeds to explain, he did not consider himself part of any association whatever; he would have signed an affidavit that he had not joined society itself. He could not respect an institution that wanted to lock him up instead of "using his services in some way." In treating him as they did, his fellow townsmen were "underbred" and the state was "half-witted."

This rather free name-calling leads to the invoking of spirit to defy matter. The town and the state regard Thoreau as "mere flesh and blood," a "body with senses," and use their superior strength against him; but such a multitude (the state has suddenly become the people) has no force. Only those "who obey a higher law" could be stronger than he. On the earthly plane, "I am not responsible for the successful working of the machinery of society. I am not the son of the engineer."

Then follows an analogy with nature: an acorn and a chestnut fall side by side; they grow as best they can till one destroys the other. If a plant does not "live according to its nature, it dies—and so does a man." This foreshadowing of Darwinian natural selection is rather rash: it could serve as an argument in favor of the Mexican War; and it is quite useless here.

The notion was only fugitive. We veer sharply into the description of the night in jail and his companion there—an excellent piece of story telling, heightened by imaginative comments in Thoreau's best vein. The upshot of the one-night stand behind bars was to convince Thoreau that the people among whom he lived were "a distinct race from me." Still, no sooner freed, he "joined a huckleberry party, who were impatient to put themselves under my conduct." So group action and leadership are not entirely forbidden to those who have seceded from society.

The contradiction keeps nagging him. The reason he has not refused the highway tax is that he wants to be a good neighbor (a neighbor to that "distinct race"); his wish is only to "declare war with the state. . . ." This, as he puts it, "is my present position." But what (he is still speaking) if "his action be biased by obstinacy"? Worry over this makes him backtrack. If he could convince himself that he had "a right to be satisfied with men as they are," he would endeavor—what? Why, "to be satisfied with things as they are"—the loveliest tautology in all political science. Thoreau knew himself better than he knew others, and he is not at ease: he doesn't want "to split hairs, to make fine distinctions, to set myself up as better than my neighbors." He wants to "discover a pretext for conformity." The constitution, formerly evil, is now "with all its faults very good."

This revised version of the state brings up, by association, statesmen, notably Daniel Webster. These movers and shakers, who on an earlier page manipulated everything from outside, are now seen to be fully inside society; but they forget that the world is *not* "governed by policy and expediency." That is well observed; a thinker would conclude that the march of history results from everybody's acts. And Webster, no longer one of the unscrupulous governors, is declared "original and practical . . . though his quality is not wisdom but prudence. . . ." Indeed, "no man with a genius for legislation has appeared in Amer-

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ica." But weren't we taught to despise legislation and act only according to our own law? Or is it that we must have laws in order to disobey them?

Apparently we have missed the point (and no wonder!) for after a passing suggestion that laws should be inspired by the "science" of the subject found in the New Testament, the homily winds up with a bow to the authority of government—"such as I am willing to submit to, for I cheerfully obey those who know and can do better than I." That authority must of course "have the . . . consent of the governed," but equally of course it must show "a true respect for the individual." The very end of the document is once again a plaintive request: Can we not take "a further step toward recognizing the rights of man"? A really free state would "recognize the individual as a higher and independent power." After that would come "a still more perfect and glorious state, which also I have imagined but never seen."

It is hardly necessary to list the inconsistencies of "Civil Disobedience." Its meanderings are enough to disqualify it as political thought and put it outside any classification. We have here: anarchism (the best government is that which does not govern at all) and government by consent—the people's will; we have aristocracy (the majority is wrong, we must follow a wise minority); we have reform (let us recognize more "rights of man") and also revolution (be a hero and resist even if the nation perishes); we have peaceful action and bloodshed too; we have extreme individualism (no law but what my judgment and conscience approve); we have tributes to practicality and the life of trade and also the denunciation of money; and we have total alienation (I have not joined Society and my fellow men are a distinct race). One might call this last stance political solipsism. In between come passages of speculation, of fantasy, and of rather ordinary complaint against present policies. Nowhere do we find one word about methods or devices of government and politics—"machinery" is despised throughout.

This hodgepodge without definite aim is certainly the reason for the great influence the piece has exerted. There is in it something for everybody and a void of clear goals that might divide followers. It is fair to add that everybody—all of us—must at some time have felt every one of the sentiments that Thoreau strung together. He found to cover them a title with immediate appeal—a title that proposes a subject he never really discusses.

Where does that leave our revered author? I think the proper name for his performance is Impressionism. Thoreau saw and felt with acuity and he had the power to express his visions and feelings. These, moreover, came in such rapid succession that their coherence, or the depths they might conceal, did not check his utterance. One has only to take a glance at *Walden* to verify this suggestion. I leave out here the marvels of *Walden* that have nothing to do with doctrine. They have enchanted many readers and always will, but it is the doctrine that has become an American myth—and the doctrine is founded on a myth. Thoreau's purpose, taken at his own valuation, was to show how one can live better apart from society and without its help. He was to be, in R. W. B. Lewis's phrase, "A New Adam." According to another critic, he was sloughing off man's whole past. In reality, he was using society and its innumerable benefits to take a camping trip.

He borrowed an ax: that ax was the product and emblem of 20,000 years of man's efforts to emerge from a purely animal life. And so in their measure were the beans, the nails, the planks that he cadged, and the helpers with whom he raised the roof over his hut. Not a new Adam, but a new Robinson Crusoe, both of them lucky to have at hand the indispensable fruits of civilization—the fruits of material, commercial, conformist, ugly civilization.

What moved Thoreau both in "Civil Disobedience" and in the Walden adventure is the desire for what Nietzsche called "the unconditioned life." It is clear that all men want to escape *some* conditions; the love of freedom is the positive statement of that feeling. And some men want to get rid of *all* conditions; one remembers the eighteenth-century Englishman who committed suicide, leaving a note that said: "Too much buttoning and unbuttoning." He could no longer bear the daily routine of clothes, which was a condition of civilized life. Thoreau partook of that absolutist temperament, though at times—but not for long—he fought against it. In those moments he made gestures of neighborliness, friendship, and sociability.

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A curious fact that has struck me in reading *Walden* and the *Journals* is that the conditions most men want to be free of did not bother Thoreau at all. I do not mean only isolation or public disfavor, I mean physical pain or discomfort. On Walden Pond he put up with conditions that even a poor farmer would have fled from, given the chance. But Thoreau goes even farther; he relishes bodily constraints: on one occasion he records "a long soaking rain . . . while I lay drenched on last year's bed of wild oats, . . . ruminating." On another he thinks, "Would it not be a luxury to stand up to one's chin in some retired swamp for a whole summer's day?" And elsewhere he asserts that "nakedness is not such a bad condition after all."

In this difference from Everyman lies, I think, the clue to Thoreau's quarrel with Concord and with society. Society, government, law, trade, money, manners, were devised and are maintained to get out of the cave, away from the state of nature. The overwhelming majority of men would rather endure the ills of bad government and social pressure than the risks of primitive existence—"solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Indeed, people want more than security and creature comforts; they want leisure and luxury, large houses and pleasant prospects, entertainment and occasional flights from responsibility, which together make up what we call civilization.

Of all this, Thoreau enjoyed only books and music and, not wanting the rest, he could not understand his neighbors. His remarks about them in the *Journals* are unjust imputations of motives that he did not feel and could only hate. Hence his love of tramps and jailbirds who, like him, have cast off society. Hence also his suspicion of manners and his rather conventional denunciation of the shams and hypocrisies of men in towns and in trade. When one is a hermit—or nearly—one fails to grasp the reason for the compromises demanded by life in groups.

Nor did Thoreau understand his own relation to society. He never saw that he could live as he did only by the bounty of a large, well-established state. The position of conscientious objector, of civil disobedient, is made possible by the great strength, the surplus wealth, the contented willingness of the citizenry. In a lifeboat that carries shipwrecked sailors, there can be no conscientious objector. There is no "different drummer" to listen to. Everyone must row and bail—and row in the direction imposed by the natural leader of the group, who may wield a cutlass to have his orders obeyed. Palaver about rights starts after all have safely come ashore.

This fundamental rule of human life does not mean that protest in organized society is wrong and should be suppressed. It is by protest and palaver that civilization has made more elastic and generous the rules governing individual conduct. But if protest is to give any direction to change, its articles of war must be more consistent and consecutive than Thoreau's or (I may add) Tolstoy's. Theirs only serve to arouse vague discontent and flatter false hopes.

Meanwhile, Thoreau was ungrateful. The forbearance accorded to him was not merely general but particular. The town constable and tax collector, Sam Staples, out of pure understanding and benevolence let Thoreau go without paying the poll tax for several years. The crisis and the night in jail came only when Staples was leaving office and had to put his account books in order. Thoreau must have known he was enjoying a privilege uniquely his, and therefore unjust; yet he prided himself on being just and paying his ordinary debts, which he did. Was his truculent behavior toward the state due to the frame of mind that Edmund Burke in a famous phrase ascribed to all of New England—"the dissidence of dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion"? There may have been in Thoreau a trace of this temper; it has made him congenial to his countrymen, squatters by cultural inheritance and agin' the government by sporting instinct. But I believe Thoreau was moved by a far stronger force—his poetic genius.

I will explain what I mean in a moment, but if I am right, Thoreau should not be regarded as double in nature, but single, integrated, one man throughout. His failure as a writer on politics comes from the same power as made him a matchless depicter of visions. He thinks in one and only one way, by instant association, not by controlled abstraction, as logical thought requires. There have been poets who could recreate impressions and also reason; they were makers *and* thinkers. Some are only makers and they do not need to think.

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It may be asked, if Thoreau was a poet, why did he write such bad poetry? He did not; he wrote bad verse, like other great prose writers—Nietzsche, Melville, Rabelais. When Emerson edited *The Dial*, he found room for some of Thoreau's early verse, but could not keep up the favor: "the gold," he said, "does not yet flow pure, but is drossy and crude." The probable cause of the crudity was the constraint of meter and rhyme.

I remember discussing Thoreau with W. H. Auden when he was compiling his five volumes of *Poets of the English Language*. No piece by Thoreau met his test, though he accepted fifteen of Melville's and even two by John Jay Chapman. Why, then, do I call Thoreau a poet? The answer comes down to what I have called visions. A poet's vision is not anything fanciful or vague. It is an actual sight with a glow and a hard edge. The glow comes from the fusion of the material core of sensation with any number of associations—emotional, intellectual, spiritual; present or remote; fleeting or permanent. In a word, it is a vivid image, recorded in faultless words; I see in Thoreau the earliest and greatest of American Imagists.

Examples of this poetic power are to be found in everything Thoreau wrote. Here is one from his first published work, the Concord and Merrimack adventure:

> . . . as when a vase of water is jarred
> the trembling circles seek the shore
> and all is smooth again.

Here is another from *Walden:*

> . . . the unrelenting steel-cold scream of a jay,
> unmelted,
> that never flows into song,
> a sort of wintry trumpet
> screaming cold.

Here is a third from the *Journals:*

> . . . a place for fauns and satyrs
> where bats hung all day to the rocks
> and at evening flitted over the water,
> and fireflies husbanded their light
> under the grass and leaves,
> against the night.

I recommend rereading Thoreau—anywhere in one's favorite work—and picking out these Imagist poems. There are even one or two that flash out as a surprise in "Civil Disobedience." Through this exercise one comes to see our author as a forerunner of Emily Dickinson, of Robert Frost, of H.D., and as a poet whose flights are more sustained than those of any Japanese maker of haiku. He himself was aware of his gift, and like most artists defined his art in keeping with his own style: "Good poetry seems so natural a thing. . . . The best lines suggest to me what that man saw or heard or felt. . . ."

But in going about culling flowers out of context, are we not doing violence to works conceived for another purpose? What are these visions of or about? The answer cannot be given in one word. The visions arise from Nature, of course, first and foremost. Color, sound, motion start the poetic fire. But other things set off visions as well: the inner life or stirrings of the spirit, including self-criticism; the acts and characters of other men; the dilemmas of ethics and the riddles of philosophy. All these occur as events and produce associations, especially in a mind as highly cultivated as Thoreau. For it is a false estimate to see him, through the mists of *Walden*, as an eloquent yeoman with a stout heart and a love of justice. He was a highbrow of the first order, the voice of outdoor life—true, but bookish to the back teeth. Nor was his scope limited to books and moral arguments. He was a good businessman and an inventor of machinery. His mind was comprehensive and his power of notation not specialized on the curiosities of the natural world.

It was indeed because of his wide reading and long brooding that Thoreau believed himself to be a philosopher and political theorist; and he has induced many to see him as he saw himself. Biographers and introducers speak of his Transcendental metaphysics and his doctrine of Political Individualism. Now one way to be unjust to an author is to praise him for qualities he does not possess. To be sure, the error about Thoreau is due to the assured, masterly tone of his conclusions, particularly in the *Journals*. But these are marvelous not for any system that dictated their writing or emerges from them gradually. In them too, inconsistency is the rule, not the exception. No: the marvel is Thoreau's fidelity to the successive visions; the marvel *depends* on the inconsistency.

For Nature and Man are not capable of

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being resumed in a system; they can, on the contrary, be best known through the reports of faithful observers, which are truest when they do *not* cohere. To take but one example, here is Nature seen at different times through the temperament of our poet. From the first, he sees Nature as solace and seeks communion with "her"—the personification is not questioned. But at times he asks, "What is Nature unless there is an eventful human life passing within her? . . . Nature must be viewed humanly or not at all." The "beneficence" of Nature appears to Thoreau in all the instances of means and ends adapted to each other in sustaining animal and human life. In that guise, he tells us, "no word is so fit as Alma Natura," nurturing Mother. But then, cruel nature is plain to see also. He starts off: "When I think of the tragedies which are constantly permitted . . . ;" "permitted" is a criticism of personified Nature. And a low point is reached when he asks, "Is not disease the rule of existence? Not a lily pad on the lake but has been riddled by insects." Each of these observations is true, from solace to disease; for as he says, observation must be subjective.

Surely, this diversity and contradiction is the true measure of experience. Life has for each man a general drift, but it will not fit into a formula, no matter how broadly phrased. And we already have too many broad phrases from popular preachers and voluble philosophers. It is better to rely on the exact and intense visions of the poets.

There is, of course, another exactness that does yield a system, and that is physical science. But it achieves its purpose only by such a degree of abstraction that it must express itself in mathematics and discard the world of the senses. For science, Walden Pond and the loon flying and laughing overhead turn into unrecognizable protons and electrons. The mysteries of *that* system are gripping too, but they are not the only mysteries or the nearest to our waking lives. Thoreau saw the danger of trusting only science: "I count some parts and say 'I know.' "

To cherish Thoreau the poet and point out the perfection of his visions is not to belittle or forget his prose. He was as great a master of prose as he was of poetry. In this he compares, once again, with a whole class of writers, from Rabelais and Swift to Nietzsche and George Meredith. How to define the quality of prose? It is motion allied to transparency. Prose is at its best when it does not call attention to itself; that is why it must keep up rhythmic interest without ever falling into meter. When in prose we come across the "poems" of the writers I have cited, it is only by compression and connotation that they are poems, and the rhythm at those points dare not even suggest meter; that is why such passages must be short—a hint of scansion, too long a vision, and prose turns into singsong and loses transparency by drawing attention to the medium. Thoreau has a remark about the sound of crickets that is in point here: "Serenely wise, their song has the security of prose."

Writing prose is a much more difficult craft than writing poetry. One proof of that truth is that all peoples have produced poetry—and this at the very beginning of their literature—but not all have developed a tolerable prose. There is none in English or French until the early seventeenth century. Up to that time, sentences meander at great length by the addition of clauses in no special order. The result is talk, not prose. But once the canons of order and lucidity come into force, the paradoxical result is that every good writer employs a prose of his own; he can be known by what we call his prose style.

That being so, it is interesting to study these individual ways. Thoreau's are remarkable, precisely for transparency and force. I have not come across a sentence of Thoreau's that was not perfectly clear on first reading. The same hard edge that gives definition to his images draws the contour line of the prose ideas. Go a few steps down the road to Mr. Emerson's and you will find a very different product. Vagueness to the point of obscurity sits like a patch of fog here and there in every paragraph; the paragraphs themselves lack contour, though the rhythm in general is pleasing. But it is talk, often inspired talk, and not prose.

Most sentences in Thoreau follow the so-called natural or simple order of thought—subject, verb, predicate. Only occasionally does he use the periodic form, in which the idea is not completed till the end. Such sentences, with him, begin more often with *when* than with *if* or *although*. These technical features fit the writer's purpose: he is nearly always talking about himself, what he did and

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what he saw—hence the simple declarative mode. A journal, in particular, must not sound like what the French call *apprêté*—all dolled up. Too periodic a style would suggest concern with the effect rather than the record. And since Thoreau's aim is to match in words the fluidity of his own impressions, his sentences are mostly short; they follow each other as if in a hurry to keep up with Nature and memory. But the paragraphs are often long, for the same reason of continuity. If now and then a sentence is long, it is in fact a chain of descriptive portions, each moving from subject to predicate.

Such a style, in other hands, might well grow tedious. In Thoreau's it is made perpetually fresh and self-propelling thanks to certain unique traits. One is a kind of backlash at the end of a passage; we read along innocently and are suddenly whipped around a corner. For example, we follow ten lines about his mixed feelings toward a friend and bump into: "I leave my friends early; I go away to cherish my idea of friendship." Or again, we are engrossed in a description of young phoebes in their nest; they have open and serene eyes that he finds memorable . . . ; then: "Such an eye was not born when the bird was, but is coeval with the sky it reflects." It is not too much to say that the lifelike sound of the *Journals* is due to these sudden turns—they virtually *turn upon* the reader and say "Wake up and look!"

Another feature of Thoreauvian prose is the epigram. A few are famous—the ones about new clothes, the different drummer, the quiet desperation, travel in Concord, and the trout in the milk. In the *Oxford Book of Aphorisms*, John Gross has chosen no fewer than thirty from Thoreau. For a writer whose output is not large, this is a high number. It puts Thoreau in a class with Bacon and Butler, Chesterton and Shaw. And thirty do not exhaust the supply; there are many wonderful sallies that draw their power from suddenness within a delicately fashioned context. For example: "Who hears the fishes when they cry?" Or still in the river, "the shining pebbles, not yet anxious to better their condition." The learned professors, he thinks, "communicate no fact which rises to the temperature of blood-heat. It doesn't all amount to one rhyme." Elsewhere, he rightly notes that "all perception of truth is the detection of an analogy; we reason from our hands to our head." And when he shies away from too scientific an outlook, he tells himself: "What I need is not to look at all, a true sauntering of the eye."

Thoreau was conscious of his art of observation and even more of his art of expression. He wanted his sentences to be "concentrated and nutty; . . . the body, the senses must conspire with the mind." And *his* mind, he knew, worked "by juxtaposing disconnected thoughts, thus opening a whole new field to labor."

It is such maxims and the resulting work that lead me to call Thoreau an Impressionist—the senses ever acting as triggers to the mind, and the verbal creation growing out of the juxtaposition of disconnected thoughts. In using the term Impressionist I am aware that it may raise memories of the French painters, whose method was exactly Thoreau's but whose results seem unlike—they did not seek the definite vision by means of the hard edge. But this difference is that of the sense to which they appeal—the sense of sight. It responds instantly to the bright shimmer of pictorial impressionism and recognizes in it the facts of nature and human character immediately. To attain the same ends with words, the artist cannot use the indefinite, cannot blur the outline. His only hope lies in the opposite mode of the sharp and clear—which is what Thoreau gives us, without on that account distorting his subject. From no other writer does one get such a sense of the immensity of the cosmos, the minuteness of its parts, and the simultaneity of its motions, which keep any object from remaining unchanged even for a moment: the indefinite reality is the true one, conveyed here by the most definite of prose masters.

Such high art, if we are not careful, can have an unfortunate side effect. Finding the marks of perfection here and here and here, we may become impatient and fretful when we do not find it in the man's work everywhere. Thus when first judging Thoreau's writings as a whole, one is tempted to think that, versed as he was in the classics, he should have obeyed the warning of Pythagoras: "Abstain from beans," meaning: have nothing to do with politics (the ancients used beans for voting as

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we use ballots). We are only too conscious of how "determined to know beans" Thoreau was—in "Civil Disobedience" and on the slope of Walden. Caught by that fact, one goes on to wish he had followed his own advice: "to keep the crystal well . . . clear—that it be not made turbid by . . . contact with the world, so that it will not reflect objects."

But those wishes of ours are misplaced, and it is Thoreau who is right: Politics, the state, slavery, and Mexican wars are objects too, and they deserve to be reflected. As I surmised earlier, everybody has probably felt the kaleidoscope of emotions recorded in "Civil Disobedience." Karl Marx, for one, certainly ran the same gamut of attitudes. As a guide to conduct, Thoreau's tract is worthless, and as a pattern for the conscientious feelings, it is deplorable; but as a record of social fantasies and desires in their wild discontinuity, it has value. In writing it, Thoreau was carrying out his proper mission. He was one and the same man throughout; we must take him whole; we must take all our poets whole; him with special warmth, because few have been so dedicated to seizing the impression, inner and outer, or so able to turn it into an Image as hard and lucent as a gem.

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IN MEMORIAM

The American Studies of Henry Nash Smith

RICHARD BRIDGMAN

A history of the American Studies movement has yet to be written, but we do know that it gained its early institutional form at Harvard in the middle thirties with the establishment of a doctoral program in American Civilization, overseen by Howard Mumford Jones, and that its first graduate, in 1940, was Henry Nash Smith. With Smith's death, in an automobile accident in Nevada last May at the age of seventy-nine, a reluctant leader of a movement always uncertain of its identity entered the history that he had pondered for so long.

The year before Henry Smith took his doctorate, he published a still well known article in the *New England Quarterly* on what he called Emerson's "problem of vocation." In it, he outlined how Emerson was torn between a commitment to such action as would reform society and a reserved life of contemplation. Ultimately, Smith thought, Emerson learned to accept the tensions between these two modes of being as "important themes for his art." One's choice of topics for investigation and their treatment often reflect one's own preoccupations, and there is every evidence that this was the case in Smith's treatment of Emerson. Further, that a scholar generally associated with the West should this early in his career have engaged himself with the quintessential New England mind is reflective of the paradoxes that regularly arise out of the diversity of American lives. Yet, as I hope to show, it makes sense, for Smith's whole career was involved in studying the problems and illusions of identity, which in turn bear upon the conduct of one's life.

Henry Smith initially possessed a distinct regional identity, to the best aspects of which he consciously elected to be faithful. He had graduated from Southern Methodist University in 1925 at the age of eighteen. In 1926, he went to Harvard for a year's graduate work. Upon his return to Dallas, he began teaching at Southern Methodist, and, under the guidance of John McGinnis, he started to co-edit the *Southwest Review*. The journal had moved in 1924 from the sponsorship of the University of Texas at Austin, where it had appeared as the *Texas Review*. Its renaming signaled larger regional aspirations, which a group of internationalists on the magazine's board broadened even further. Over the years, various members of the creative and academic communities were associated with it as contributing editors, among them Mary Austin, Witter Bynner, Albert Guérard, Howard Mumford Jones, and Jay B. Hubbell. It was among this company that Henry Smith began to stake out an editorial ground.

Smith wrote editor's notes, book reviews, and articles for the *Southwest Review*, an experience he later described as "a sort of super-graduate seminar, an Institute of Higher Studies." Under McGinnis's tutelage, he said, "We learned to abhor slipshod thinking and shoddy writing, and to respect clear ideas and sound prose." Another person familiar with the situation said that, by the middle of the Depression, "the magazine certainly would have died had Smith not given up everything else but his teaching to keep it going." The teaching itself was no small re-

RICHARD BRIDGMAN is the author of *The Colloquial Style in America* and other books. Except for periods as visiting professor at the University of Copenhagen and at Moscow State University, he has taught since 1962 at the University of California, Berkeley.

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sponsibility, for at that time the normal load at SMU was fifteen class hours a week. The strain was sufficient for Smith to have written in a private letter in 1936 that "keeping the magazine going seems to involve an outlay of energy and time that is entirely unreasonable; according to all common sense it is not worth it."

His first full-length article, written when he was twenty-two, with the articulateness and confidence of one twice his age, was entitled "Culture." It displayed many of the lines of his subsequent thought. He was still thinking locally, as when he observed that, even if signs of an interest in art had sprung up lately in Texas, to him they appeared no more than "a superficial striving for an effect without a cause." In their material prosperity, Texans were suffering from "the inanity of ease" that had caused the women with their earnest presences and the men with their checkbooks to try to handle culture as a purchasable commodity.

In defining "culture," Smith said that it was "not anything mensurable," but that one sense of it was "the ability to do nothing, significantly." At its best, he argued that culture was "not a lecturer and a study class"—the common secular means at that time for middle-class enlightenment—but "a society of free individuals." Smith's definitions were always of that nature: straightforward but a little vague, certainly not academic or technical, but always with the force of imperative ideas behind them. This feature of his thought seemed to have derived from the nature of Texas intellectual life at the time—a period when various figures, such as Walter Prescott Webb and J. Frank Dobie, associated themselves only cautiously with the academy. Dobie, a close friend of Smith, had written on Thomas Heywood's *The Golden Age* for his master's degree at Columbia, but having done so, he evolved into a Western folklorist, and once remarked that "the average Ph.D. thesis is nothing but the transference of bones from one graveyard to another." As for Webb, although he eventually became an internationally known historian of the West, he failed to complete his doctorate at the University of Chicago, and when one was finally awarded to him by the University of Texas, it was because his home institution accepted as his dissertation *The Great Plains*, a book that he had published the year before. Webb was then forty-four. No wonder that in reviewing Norman Foerster's *American Scholar* in 1930, Smith should have declared: "Someone should say once in a while, where it will be heard in academic circles, that there are other forms of strenuousness of the spirit than those involved in scholarly research." Despite taking his bachelor's degree at a comparatively young age, Smith himself was thirty-four before achieving his Harvard doctorate, and forty-four before his first book, *Virgin Land*, appeared. All of which is to say that research degrees were not then a central goal for Texas thinkers.

In writing reviews for the Dallas *Morning News* book page and editing the *Southwest Review*, Smith had elected to make a career not solely within institutional education, but not excluding it. He was seeking something more authentic than the local study groups dedicated to Browning's poetry and superior to mass culture. He pointed out that the urban Texan lived in an unreal world, made up of cars that originated in Detroit, popular songs from Manhattan, and movies from California. The value of these "opiates" needed to be assessed skeptically. The way to do it was for Texans to understand and participate in "their specific environment," for not until they had accepted the local world would it become universal. Then, "when we have whole men and women we shall have composers and poets." Smith had brought the Emersonian ethos from Harvard to Dallas.

Questions of identity were central in the Southwest at that time. Like Americans in general, perpetually trying to separate their authentic elements from patterns inherited from abroad, the Texan was cultivating an awareness of his immediate environment without cutting himself off from the larger world. The group with whom Smith came to maturity was far from parochial. Webb had done advanced work at the University of Chicago, and in 1942–43 was the Harnsworth Professor of American History at Oxford; Dobie had attended Columbia and during 1943–44 gave a series of popular lectures at Cambridge University; and Smith himself had graduated from Harvard and later lectured throughout Europe. Yet each identified with the Southwest, without yielding sentimentally to such vulgar manifestations of Texas

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jingoism as its six-shooters, boots, and ten-gallon hats—what Smith called "fossilized Western symbols preserved in contemporary popular culture."

Yet, one must not deny one's environment. In his commitment to regionalism, Smith pointedly distinguished the Southwest from the South, which was itself undergoing a renaissance of sorts just then. Although Smith criticized the primitive state of development in the Southwest—it had no university comparable to that of North Carolina, he said, and it neglected minds like Stark Young, Frank Dobie, and John Lomax—nonetheless, when the time came, he was confident that the region's literary results would differ markedly from those produced in the South. He argued that the Southern Agrarian movement merely perpetuated "the myth of the plantation, an American Arcadia," even as it neglected the South's actual economic problems. As for the Southwest, Smith spoke years later in paying tribute to Dobie of the folklorist's love of freedom and his resistance to "all coercive forces," which Smith identified as no abstraction, "but a quality of experience of actual human beings in immediate contact with a semi-parched earth—its dust and heat and relentless distances, its austere plants and lean animals."

As a young editor and teacher, Smith regularly composed essays on current issues as well. He took the opportunity of the 1928 election to criticize Hoover's "philosophy of comfort," saying that Hoover was "not stressing the actual relief of misery—no one could object to that or fail to applaud it—but instead he is holding up as his principal argument the superiority of the American standard of luxury to that of other nations. There is in his attitude entirely too much exaltation of creature comfort and economic prudence without any suggestion of the free play of ideas." In another article, given the expatriate movement on the one hand and Sinclair Lewis's exposure of the tawdriness of Main Street on the other, Smith addressed the question of why one would even wish to live in the United States. Again, he emphasized the obligation to confront actuality: "We must learn to cease looking for idyllic beauty in the Texas Panhandle or for a Gothic architecture on our Main Streets" and rather "learn to respond to the niggardly grandeur of the plains" as well as to "conceive the sort of building which belongs on our soil." Then, memorably: "Newness half-violated is the American environment; but it has its compensations."

Even as Smith was trying out his ideas, his Methodist university was suffering the onset of political strain. Worse for Smith, the chairman of the English department tried to fire him on moral grounds, while the university president more diplomatically sought his resignation by offering a year's pay without duties. The problem was William Faulkner.

At the publication of *The Sound and the Fury* in 1929, Smith had reviewed it favorably, saying that certain pages in it were "very near great literature," while at the same time underlining his particular concerns with the observation that the "book has shown unguessed possibilities in the treatment of provincial life without loss of universality." Admiring Faulkner's work, he had purchased the story "Miss Zilphia Gant" for the *Southwest Review*. The story had already been rejected twice by *Scribner's* and the *American Mercury*. John McGinnis then persuaded Smith not to publish it in their journal, whereupon Smith arranged for it to be brought out in 1932, by the Book Club of Texas in an edition of three hundred copies, with an introduction by Smith himself.

Those were the grounds for which John O. Beaty, Smith's chairman, sought his dismissal. Beaty regarded "Miss Zilphia Gant" as "the foulest book I have ever read—a book which parades sex abnormalities in a hideous way and also contains a particularly scurrilous attack on Jesus Christ." Beaty was about right, for this is one of Faulkner's cruder stories, with a half-wit, a tramp lover, a woman justifying masturbating to herself because "Mary did it without a man," two murders, and a general domestic pathology sustained over two generations. SMU's president, Charles Selecman, agreed that the story was "salacious and immoral in tone," but when Smith returned from England where he was then teaching and refused to resign, the president made a place for Smith in the Comparative Literature department, even though Beaty regarded this compromise as "a surrender to subversive elements."

During this same period, Selecman himself came under fire from his faculty because of his imperiousness and, worse, for his insensitiv-

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ity to salaries. Smith was one of the faculty members who petitioned formally to the board of trustees for relief, which in time was partially granted. The constricted tangle of academic life in Texas certainly contributed in large measure to Smith's eventual decision to leave. By 1937, he had reentered Harvard and enrolled in its new American Civilization program. After taking his doctorate there in 1940, he returned for a year to SMU, where he at once introduced a "History of American Civilization" program, but the following year he moved to the University of Texas at Austin as a professor of American History *and* English, departmental boundaries still being sufficiently rigid to make it difficult to accommodate a representative of the new field of American Studies.

At the University of Texas, too, trouble was brewing, which resulted in 1944 with the dismissal of the university's president, Homer P. Rainey. In the aftermath of this controversial decision, Smith prepared a documentary pamphlet for the Students Association, which was then engaged in protest demonstrations. In the pamphlet, some of Smith's most characteristic qualities of mind emerged. In the preamble to his account, Smith warned that both his selection of materials and the emphasis he placed upon them would "inevitably reveal a perspective." "No one," he said, "can prepare such a narrative without using a frame of reference." But that did not mean a historian could not tell the truth—"It is merely a comment on the nature of historical truth, which is human rather than mathematical or mechanical."

Smith then outlined the chronology of events at the University of Texas from 1939 through 1945. There had been several confrontations in which the university regents accused the faculty of immorality, racial liberalism, and Communist sympathies. At one point, reviewing a contretemps over faculty representation on the athletic council, Smith concluded: "I confess that a careful study of these two accounts has failed to leave me with a clear impression of what happened. . . . Since the matter has not attracted very much attention, I am inclined to leave it at that." Then, suggesting the distance between him and his fellow Texans, he added: "I have never been able to understand intercollegiate athletics." One issue, though, must have struck him with special force. In 1942, for a reading course designed for sophomore engineering students, John Dos Passos's *Big Money* had been assigned. One of the regents attacked the choice as "sheer worship of filth for filth's sake" by a "degenerate group of sophisticates," and, despite faculty protests, the novel was ultimately dropped from the reading list.

Although formally remaining a member of the Texas faculty until 1947, Smith returned to Harvard in 1945 to replace Perry Miller while he was on leave; then, in the following year, Smith accepted a fellowship at the Huntington Library. In effect, his years in Texas were over. In 1947, he moved to the University of Minnesota to join a diversely formidable group, improbably gathered there, among them Joseph Warren Beach, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Samuel H. Monk. While at Minnesota, just as the McCarthy period opened, Smith addressed another national issue—academic freedom—which was then tormenting the University of Washington. In his 1949 essay "Legislatures, Communists, and State Universities," Smith argued the case against dismissing faculty members who were Communists on the grounds that the pressures against being a party member were so severe in the United States that "remaining in the party is itself an act of free choice, constantly repeated." In fact, he added, it was tangibly advantageous for a faculty member to *leave* the Party, rather than to endure the obloquy of open membership. Smith's central point was that an open society, and institutions in it such as the universities, required freedom of discussion. He believed that the steady expansion of the sphere of unacceptable behavior was a profoundly dangerous one and that the subjection of a university to any orthodoxy was inevitably destructive.

A decade after he moved to Berkeley in 1953, Smith found himself immersed in a series of successive and related uprisings, starting with the Free Speech movement, then progressing through the Vietnam, Cambodian, and Third World protests, all of which pitted the university against its regents and legislature, with the ultimate firing of administrative officials. During this period of wearing turmoil, Smith was less publicly visible than in the past. Rather, he operated largely

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behind the scenes as a trusted conciliator, talking and negotiating with all parties. Smith was never, I think, a joyful controversialist. His engagement came from principle. By nature he was a deliberate speaker and writer. In his lecture courses, he invariably developed his ideas and the evidence for them in a step-by-step sequence that gained the respect but not the enthusiasm of his undergraduate students. He was not a performer. Listening to him lay out an argument afforded pleasures comparable to those derived from following a strong, solid chess game.

It is difficult to communicate a presence as unassuming as Henry's, but there is no doubt in my mind that it constituted an important part of his influence as an intellectual leader. Tall, lanky, with a slight, measured drawl, he was neither flamboyant nor eccentric, but that most improbable of entities, a sober, serious citizen who liked to laugh. Rational in the best sense, he took genuine pleasure in thinking and never turned contemptuously away from new developments in thought. If asked, he would explain his reservations, and would candidly acknowledge his bewilderment rather than make a pretense of comprehension, and then seek enlightenment as he did in a series of letters to his friend Helen Vendler over the significance of John Ashbery. Always courteous, usually calm, he lightened his burdens in the evening with martinis, baroque music, and friends.

As a graduate teacher, Smith insisted upon thorough research and regarded precision as imperative, though without being pedantic about it. After Tony Tanner took a seminar from Smith, he wrote an account of it as a model for British universities. Tanner described how the group of students were initially puzzled by the variety of apparently extra-literary projects they were set, such as locating the popular ideas of science in the period under consideration, the nature of book illustrations, the size and distribution of the reading public, and the psychological assumptions of the periodical critics. But later, as they read the fiction together, Tanner said that they came to realize the rich density of understanding they had already accumulated as a group.

In my own experience, Smith was a patient graduate director who encouraged independence, even though it was a time when we were obliged to discuss seriously whether a dissertation on pre-Jeffersonian agrarianism might conceivably be passed by an English department (and to decide that it would not). The best I can say is that he left one alone to get the quirks out of one's system; but, when asked, he always gave candid help and worked through drafts quickly and efficiently. On one of my manuscripts, he noted "the deadening effect of allowing your discourse to verge on 'And another ant brought another grain of wheat.' " That made me wince, then laugh, then revise.

All this has been a long foreground to the Texan Henry Smith becoming Henry Nash Smith as he emerged onto the national scene in 1950 by establishing emphatically the power and originality of his mind with the publication of *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*. The book had a prolonged gestation like a European doctoral thesis, crowning a career rather than, as in America, initiating one. Smith had been slowly formulating his ideas and doing the punishing research necessary for a project of this magnitude, contributing in the process four chapters on Southern and Western subjects to the *Literary History of the United States* in 1948. The essential questions that *Virgin Land* addressed were: How did nineteenth-century Americans view the huge blankness of the West, and in turn, how did their imaginative conceptions affect their behavior? What hypnotizes and draws men into action, especially under the rude conditions of a frontier? Smith had already observed the power of misconceptions in the more limited area of the Southwest. Now he elected to think about that great dim North American continent stretching out beyond the Alleghenies. As the continent was explored, inhabited, and cultivated, various images of it developed. First, there were those conceptions that drew people to and beyond the frontier, and then those generated by encounters with the territory itself. Smith's originality was in seeing that these diverse ways of identifying both the land and the particular kinds of people operating on it were products of the imagination, and that even when they were incontestably at odds with the reality of the scene, they still often functioned effectively.

If some of Smith's sources were from literature now considered classic, notably that by

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James Fenimore Cooper and Walt Whitman, he drew much more upon the revelatory evidence of popular writing. The early quasi-fictional lives of Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, and Kit Carson yielded in the sixties to Erastus Beadle's series of dime novels, closely followed by the theatrical flamboyance of Buffalo Bill Cody. But visions of the West were hardly confined to imaginative literature. They also appeared in the writings of travelers, scientists, traders, and politicians, none of whom could see without preconceptions. The coalescence of their views of the far territories proved to be compelling determinants on practical matters, such as legislation, as well as on the behavior of the populace.

Smith's patient harvest of diverse testimonies indicated what insights were available when one ignored, as it were, the limits of any specifically defined academic discipline. In the opening pages of one chapter of *Virgin Land*, the sources for Smith's argument are successively: Tocqueville's *Democracy in America;* an essay by Whitman; Lewis Evans's *Geographical, Historical, Political, Philosophical Essay* (1775); Jonathan Carver's *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768;* Nathaniel Ames's *Astronomical Diary;* a poem by Freneau; a letter and an essay by Franklin; an article from the *William and Mary Quarterly* and one from *Agricultural History;* and George Logan's *Letters, Addressed to the Yeomanry of the United States* (1791). Each source constitutes a part of the extremely intricate mosaic that Smith was assembling. One never feels that their function is to crush the reader with authority, but rather to enlighten by means of establishing unexpected conjunctions of evidence.

As he worked with his materials, Smith gradually decided that the central ideas of the American West coalesced under three headings that were historically sequential but subject to much overlapping and contradiction. Initially, the continent was regarded as no more than a "passage to India," a practical means of gaining access to the rich Oriental trade. But crossing the continent required the services of various experts in wilderness ways, such as guides and hunters. In tribute to Cooper's great creation, Smith designated them "sons of Leatherstocking." Finally, as the West began to be domesticated by farmers, it acquired a powerful imaginative identity as "the garden of the world."

Smith shows how each of these governing symbols originated, then spread throughout discourses of different kinds, as well as how certain important implications developed out of them. As the various embodiments of the frontiersman proved to be especially influential, Smith traces his character and its various incarnations from Daniel Boone through Cooper's mythmaking and into the "objectified mass dream" of the popular romances (printed on the new rapid rotary steam presses and therefore appropriately known as "steam literature"). Smith follows the evolution of the Western hero until the early 1870s, at which point the cowboy (first known as a "herder") begins to emerge. In an analysis that remains noteworthy even today, he also considers the heroines of the dime novels, to whom the frontiersman's skills were transferred, producing Hurricane Nell, Wild Edna, and Calamity Jane. Smith only suggests the subsequent extensions of the self-reliant frontiersman into the private detective, although in reconsidering *Virgin Land* he cited appreciatively the work of John G. Cawelti, who demonstrated the persistence of this kind of hero in such related genres as the spy thriller and science fiction.

If the frontiersman dominated the imaginative frontier, his identity required definition; but, when one was advanced, problems arose at once. What was the essence of the role he played? Was he a representative of civilized values, bringing the light of rationality into a savage gloom? Or was he a child of nature, withdrawing from the legalisms and artificialities of urban civilization to pursue an elemental existence of bracing immediacy? Each conception of the frontiersman had its own imaginative limitations. The standard-bearer for a Christian empire could become sufficiently civilized and pious as to lose the force of his independence, while in the anarchistic conditions of the wilderness the new Adam had the potential of lapsing into brutish criminality.

Since the conventions of antebellum American literature were hardly prepared to accommodate a harsh realism—it would take the experience of a murderous Civil War to achieve that—various adaptations of the frontiersman had to be made, particularly in re-

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spect to love, marriage, and domesticity. Sensing that too much taming would forfeit the primal energy of the character, writers normally just decided to keep the frontiersman-hero apart from women. But the necessary mingling of the frontiersman with other members of society generated conflicts of class. Even fictional conventions required that only certain people could consort intimately with others, so that, however morally noble Natty Bumppo might be, his background excluded him from certain social relationships. Dialect, too, became an index of self, and for Smith in particular, the significance of one's speech patterns became central, for his next major work would concern Mark Twain's championship of the vernacular, with all the triumphs, but also strains and limitations, connected with such an advocacy.

As the frontier moved westward, leaving behind land now available to be worked, the political imagination of Americans began to develop an abstract conception of its inhabitants that went back at least as far as Crèvecoeur and Jefferson—that of the yeoman farmer, the freeholder whose job and pleasure it was to cultivate this earthly paradise. (The South, whose system was built on much larger agricultural units, worked by slaves, concurrently developed an alternative myth of the plantation pastoral.) On the whole, even if he appeared regularly in political rhetoric, the sturdy yeoman resisted translation into fiction, for he lacked the adventurousness associated with the men of the frontier.

The territory that the yeoman inhabited came to have an equivalent myth—that of a garden, an agrarian paradise of fertile soil, blessed with a balanced outpouring of sun and rain. Such images appeared regularly in legislative speeches, even though the reality was quite different. As Americans moved West, they encountered not Eden but treeless prairies and a succession of agricultural blights: tornadoes, dust storms, drought, and locusts. At the same time, as huge land grants were made to the railways, then transferred into the hands of speculators, Eastern capital began to invest in Western land, perverting the idea of an agrarian utopia, even as the technology of steam-driven tractors and threshing machines threatened the existence of independent freeholds. Yet, the myth of a garden cultivated by small freeholders persisted, and persists even into contemporary farm crises, where businessmen farmers with land and equipment capitalized to several million dollars are still idealized as simple husbandmen.

Smith proposed that the myth of the garden had several other large-scale consequences, among them a characteristic American isolationism, encouraged by the conception of self-sufficiency available in the protected heartland. Also, the argument that the existence of large areas of fertile land served the United States as a safety valve seemed to him dubious even for the nineteenth century. That myth, he thought, simply masked conditions of unemployment and labor strife. The governing powers of mercantile trade and industrial technology profited by the sustained assumption that, if things were unsatisfactory, then one could always move westward, for there were invariably immigrants and conservative stay-at-homes who would take over the abandoned jobs—on industry's terms.

Virgin Land contains much more than this summary has covered, but perhaps I have suggested the provocative nature of its insights, achieved by a patient survey of statistics, historical accounts, political speeches, and popular fiction. As the United States assumed its role of international power and prominence, Smith offered a complex interpretation of the capaciousness, depth, and illusion of its early years. Still, the book has had its critics, Smith among them. They have focused especially on his use of what were seemingly his central organizing terms, *myth* and *symbol*. It is clear that Smith never intended these terms to be much more than mechanisms to enable him to organize a great deal of imaginative material in which he found certain shared assumptions and dynamics—what he called "recurrent images and constellations of images." On the other hand, he later came to believe that, in *Virgin Land*, he had too readily accepted the nineteenth-century view that saw the American Indians at "a stage of evolution far inferior to that of the European settlers," and that, with the help of revisionist historians and young agitators who identified themselves with the Native Americans, he now saw that the cost of domesticating the continent had been "a prolonged act of genocide."

Because of Smith's centrality for the Amer-

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ican Studies movement, theoretical issues continued to dog him. The movement, begun at Harvard in the thirties, came to prominence after the Second World War. In part, it involved a yearning to move intellectual investigations beyond the strict boundaries of disciplines as conventionally defined, to find a way of studying the interactions of consciousness and society. It was a time when departments of English were dominated by an older generation of philologists and belletrists, with the young Turks of the New Criticism on the rise. History was regarded as invested by a fallacious scientific objectivity, whereas literary studies were becoming committed to the autonomy of the text, quite outside biography and history. At the same time, with the United States prominent on the world scene, there was an increasing national self-consciousness, a greater concern for locating an American identity. As it happened, this search for identity soon became an international preoccupation, with the result that the American Studies movement became as important abroad as it was in the United States. (In fact, Bernard Faÿ had assumed the chair of American Civilization at the Collège de France as early as 1932.) The U.S. government assisted this activity by encouraging European and Asian nations to make a gesture toward reducing their war debts by acquiring libraries of American books and by sponsoring visiting lecturers from the United States.

Meanwhile, the American Studies movement itself underwent paroxysms of self-definition. Had it a methodology? If not, could it develop one? Henry Smith continued to resist technical intricacies. In the opening pages of *Virgin Land*, he had finessed the problem of *myth* and *symbol* by defining them as "larger or smaller units of the same kind of thing, namely an intellectual construction that fuses concept and emotion into an image." In a later article, he defined American Studies with similar deceptive simplicity. It was "the study of American culture, past and present, as a whole." As for "culture," it was "the way in which subjective experience is organized."

Such language was hardly adequate at the theoretical level, but even Bruce Kuklick, the most severe critic of Smith's philosophic underpinnings, concluded that, although "humanist scholarship in American Studies illustrates a set of classic errors . . . , I realize that philosophical criticism is much easier to do than constructive empirical research." Smith's goal was invariably humanistic. He sought access to those meanings that were larger than those available in historical data or aesthetic evaluation alone. Others, like his colleague at Harvard and Minnesota, Leo Marx, openly defended an "unscientific method" for American Studies, claiming, justifiably, I think, that it tried not to be capricious or impressionistic but believed that significant relationships were not susceptible to quantification and that discursive meanings were not all that was available in a culture.

American Studies, then, tried to prove its value in practice, not theory. Forces deeper than theoretical precision were in operation. Over the next generation, they produced a number of illuminating studies of Americans' relationship to the continent they occupied, among them R. W. B. Lewis's *The American Adam* (1955), which concerned the myth of America offering the individual a fresh beginning, one emancipated from the chains of history; Leo Marx's consideration of classic American writers reacting to the onset of industrial technology, *The Machine in the Garden* (1964); and Richard Slotkin's location of a sanctified destructiveness in American life in *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600–1860* (1973).

The American Studies movement expanded rapidly. Most of the activity, however, was devoted, not toward the larger unifying themes of the culture itself, but rather toward more narrowly defined areas, such as education, labor, and folklore. The movement soon produced a journal, *American Quarterly*, followed later by others edited in Canada, Great Britain, and Scandinavia. It is notable that Smith was rarely a central participant in these organized activities. We never discussed the matter directly, but my sense was that he was made uneasy by such exuberant national self-preoccupation. I do know that, when he moved in 1953 from Minnesota to the University of California, he hardly participated in its American Studies activities, which at any rate never developed beyond a one-year undergraduate honors' course.

At the same time that Henry Smith joined Berkeley's English department, he was invited to assume the editorship of the Mark

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Twain papers. His selection now seems inevitable. It determined the course of Smith's work for the next twenty years. For a time in his role as editor, Smith had many administrative decisions and legal negotiations to carry out. He was not enamored of such work, but he could never resist a serious call from society. He believed in the community of scholars, and when he felt it was his responsibility to do so, he served. Once at the airport on a Christmas afternoon, I was grousing to him about the obligation of leaving on a holiday for the Modern Language Association meeting. Henry heard me out for a while, then, looking straight at me, he said, "It's what we do." After a moment, to temper that disconcertingly sober observation, he smiled and added: "Don't you know the cows have to be milked on Sundays too?"

Once the Twain papers had been organized, Smith accepted the chairmanship of the department, serving from 1957 through 1960. In 1968–69, he was president of the MLA, and in 1973, the year before he retired, he agreed to chair an arduous year-long study of the future of Berkeley's English department. All of these activities seriously dissipated his energies, although I don't suppose he would have conceded the legitimacy of the implications of that proposition.

In 1957, Smith brought out *Mark Twain of the Enterprise*, a selection of Virginia City journalism, helpfully placed in its historical context. Three years later, the *Mark Twain-Howells Letters, 1872–1910* appeared in two volumes co-edited with William Gibson and so scrupulously annotated and indexed that even today the collection remains the most detailed and reliable compilation of information about many of the people and dates in Clemens's life—quite aside from affording the intrinsic interest of listening to the two Midwestern writers exchange ideas with one another over nearly forty years. Finally, in 1962, Smith published his own thoughts on Clemens's career in *Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer*.

The focus of Smith's consideration here was on Mark Twain's discovery of the power and uses of the vernacular, a term Smith expanded to mean not diction alone but a whole set of attitudes and values, constituting a new, sometimes skeptical, sometimes appreciative perspective on the world. Twain's increasing awareness of those gifts that first brought him to prominence constituted a version of the problem Smith had addressed years before in Dallas: the regionalist's task of achieving authenticity through a consciousness of the actualities of his environment. For Twain, the task meant establishing his identity in relation to what Smith called "the Matter of Hannibal"—that is, "by working out a continuity between his adult life in Hartford and his remote childhood in the small town on the west bank of [the Mississippi] thirty years in the past." Smith showed how Twain intuitively, not programmatically, worked his way past the popular spread-eagle oratory and brag as well as the genteel tradition that dominated polite literature in order to create in *Huckleberry Finn* a middle style largely free of dialect, of idiosyncratic color, and of "eloquence," yet with an eloquence all its own.

Because Mark Twain entered a period of severe ideological trauma in the 1890s, his later works served Smith's argument less well. Accordingly, Smith took the opportunity to readdress one of them in a series of lectures that appeared in 1964 as *Mark Twain's Fable of Progress: Political and Economic Ideas in "A Connecticut Yankee."* Here, he explored the implications of the protagonist, Hank Morgan, being at once a capitalist and a vernacular hero. The consequence was that what had started as a good-natured burlesque of Arthurian England ended in the nightmarish carnage of the book's conclusion.

Smith's last book, *Democracy and the Novel: Popular Resistance to Classic American Writers*, appeared in 1978 following his retirement. Its chapters are somewhat awkwardly linked essays, which in themselves are often perceptive, however roughly they cohere. In them, Smith reversed his long preoccupation with popular culture in order to understand the tensions that the major novelists felt as they contested the commonly held assumptions of their nation. Various problems of audience, of moral standards, and of inhibiting conventions are considered against a background of genteel sentimentalism.

During Henry Smith's long involvement with Mark Twain, much of his energy was directed toward trying to steer a rational course through the extended turmoil that began at Berkeley with the Free Speech movement, then escalated nationally to encompass,

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over the better part of the next ten years, protests against academic establishments, the United States involvement in Vietnam and its Cambodian aftermath, and various Third World strikes and confrontations. It was a period of extreme tension and, inevitably, of regular demands for redefinitions of purpose and priorities in the university. As president of the MLA in 1969, Smith faced the problems head-on.

He gave his presidential address an ironic title, drawn from a Bob Dylan song: "Something Is Happening, But You Don't Know What It Is, Do You, Mr. Jones?" He acknowledged that his term as president had been "distinctly uncomfortable," but he accepted the challenges of the militants as offered in good faith. On behalf of the profoundly establishmentarian Modern Language Association, he tried systematically to sort through the various charges of its rebellious members to determine those for which concrete action was already underway, those that he thought deserved immediate attention, and those that required further discussion to clarify the ends in mind.

One issue Smith identified as of the greatest importance for consideration was the claim that, because "objective" scholarship, criticism, and teaching failed to question the existing social and economic orders, they therefore represented nothing more than an immoral neutrality. Smith regarded it as salutary to re-examine the aims and methods of scholarship; at the same time, he believed that the challengers incurred the obligation of proposing alternatives, which themselves would be susceptible to scrutiny and debate. There is a self-conscious tone throughout the address, a hint that Smith felt that even the act of making an annual address might be outdated, and that there were disagreements, misunderstandings, and agendas that went far beyond his own commitment to rational discourse. The "inglorious liberalism" that he represented supposed, he said, that "all political activity involves some degree of guilt. Absolute purity is unattainable; but to fail of perfection is not necessarily to accept total corruption." Provocation was useful, he reiterated doggedly, whenever it obliged scholars to explain why their work merited attention.

The speech is to me a moving document, for it represents Henry Smith still exemplifying those principles to which he had adhered all his life, but adapting them to the contemporary situation. Whatever his reservations about the passionate tumult swirling around him, he tried to turn its energies to the positive ends of re-examining self and its institutions. He himself had always been willing to acknowledge his own insufficiencies, anxieties, and weaknesses. So there was something ironically painful for anyone who knew his stands against administrative and legislative interference with the intellectual life in Dallas, in Austin, in Seattle, and in Berkeley to find him now leading—and threatened with being identified as the tool of—an establishment organization that was under attack. But Henry understood the whims as well as the reasons of history and long before had learned to endure their fitful onslaughts. At the conclusion of his address, he opened the floor to questions.

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Rootless

DOROTHY BACKER

We sat on the terrace of our house in Karachi, drinks in hand, making two separate lists, his and hers, of places on the globe, in order of preference, to which we would be willing to retire. I don't remember all the places we mentioned. His included a houseboat on the Rupununi River in Guyana. Mine included a cottage on a dirt road in southern France. Curiously, few of our choices coincided. Yet we are a reasonably attuned married couple of thirty-odd years' standing and have lived all over the world together.

Those lists were a private amusement, our little in-joke. We, my husband and I, are chronic expatriates and chronic list-makers. Our expatriation is a function of his career as an international financial consultant. My own two careers, of teaching and writing, have had to flourish in the interstices, but I have not minded it, at least not enough to quit this life. I managed while living in ten foreign countries to get a doctorate, teach at a university here and there for several years, and write a few books. Would I have done more or better work staying at home? I will never know.

Thinking now about this list-making game has brought on some thoughts about expatriatism itself, that so little-examined yet so modern feature of our—as it sometimes seems—collapsing modern world. There are expatriates and expatriates. I must draw a line at the outset between voluntary and involuntary ones, though in doing so I'm cutting-and-drying the very notion of free will. There's a difference in degree of volition between an American wife leaving home heavyhearted because her husband wants to make money abroad and, say, Trotsky. The most scathingly baroque epithet of Stalinist times was that of "rootless cosmopolitan," or the even more ringing "passportless cosmopolitan." No matter that these globe-trotters were running for their lives, their passports canceled, their roots lopped from under them. They were *blamed* for leaving the motherland, for their internationalist dreams.

We live in happier times and places, and in the West our patriotism has never been this ferocious. We have fewer involuntary exiles. Tax evaders, drug dealers, Mafia murderers may long for home as poignantly as any Ukrainian dissident, but we do not waste much sympathy on them. Vietnam draft dodgers come to mind, but their criminality has long since lost any association with cowardice or dishonor. Some even admire their risky idealism, and many have come home to a hero's welcome more fervent than that given to those who fought the war.

But I am now focusing on the entirely voluntary, peacetime expatriates whose absence from home is a clearly non-political choice, who stay away for years and end up, as we did, sitting on an alien balcony in a foreign country, discussing ever further and further horizons.

There is another distinction to be observed, the one between expatriates and tourists. A tourist may be a lifetime gadabout, but he is not an expatriate. The tourist visits; the expatriate lives. When they commingle—as they inevitably do, for the tourist looks up his cousin in Rome in the hope of achieving some inside intimacy and thus going the other tourists one better—they rarely understand one another. The tourist asks his cousin for special delights not on the usual program. Some for-

DOROTHY BACKER is the author of *Precious Women* and *The Parma Legacy*.

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gotten alley in Trastevere, some unfashionable restaurant where the Romans go, some dusty marble bust in a corner of the Villa Borghese. The cousin groans. He is embarrassed. He says, "But there are no secrets left in Rome. It has all *been* discovered. Why don't you visit the Colosseum?" The tourist is offended. He thinks his cousin despises him. He wants more than ever to get into the unmapped Rome, the hidden reality. He persists, "Surely *you* don't live here like a tourist. *You* know what real life is. Show me that." And the cousin groans again, and says, "There's nothing to show you. It's just like home. I'll take you to my restaurant, but it's not the best food in the world. Bank clerks go there. I'll introduce you to my friends, but all they ever talk about is the price of beans. I'll take you to my local monument, a broken fountain around the corner, but you won't appreciate it until you've studied the big tourist fountains." The visitor is stung. He judges his cousin a bore, a snob.

Or maybe the cousin is willing to take the tourist to the big flashy sights, expatiate on the symbolism of the Sistine frescoes, walk him through the Arch of Trajan while quoting Virgil, maybe even take him to dinner at Passeto's. It is the Roman cousin who will feel stung at the end of the visit. He has been forced to spend time and money looking at things he knows like the back of his hand. He has eaten expensively, fallen out of his routine. The experience has been tiring and superficial.

Expatriates who live in tourist traps like Paris and Rome wait in dread for the annual invasion. They are sitting ducks. They often move to hideouts during the season, or even go touring themselves. But they go to offbeat sites, return at leisure to the ones they know. They often see more than the natives do. They are ideal preservers of ruins. Expatriates write the best guidebooks.

A tourist wants to collect *frissons* of the foreign. His globe-trotting is a series of sorties, reconnaissance flights, maybe daring, reckless ones, like those of Baudelaire's voyager who would plunge to the depths of the abyss, looking for—*du nouveau!* But the tourist is anchored. He belongs somewhere. The anchor cable yanks him back.

I once visited Ireland on a guided tour with my sister from Long Island. She loved it all, the thatch, the beer halls, the jigging and singing, the leprechaun of a tour guide and his jokes. I was less comfortable. The regimentation of the tour, the gaping credulity of my fellow tourists, the phony self-portrayal of the Irish bothered me. Snobbery? I don't think so. The very process of organized tourism bothers the expatriate who is used to living out of his natural element. He feels that he is touching the new places too lightly. Or he is cynical about their transformation into "sights." This misty landscape, this mossy castle, this glassworks have been done over to accommodate him. The Irish have sold their beauty for tourist dollars. I don't blame them, but what am I looking at? Where is the real Ireland? Maybe the Irish are hiding out in market towns like Limerick, not on display, not acted out, away from the big busloads. We went there for two days of relief. My sister accepted the rose gardens as she had accepted Blarney Castle. I yearned to move there.

Visiting Ireland was for me tourism, but I have *lived* in London, Paris, Rome, Athens, several less frequented cities like Teheran and Karachi, and even some steamy places in Uganda, Liberia, Colombia. What is the dividing line between visiting and living? Sometimes I think it is curtains. Whenever I have had to put up curtains, the hearthlike nature of the house became clear to me. Or maybe it's cooking. Home was where I had a kitchen to run. But this is not a rule without exceptions. In southern Portugal we put up curtains and had a kitchen, but I never thought of that apartment we lived in on the beach as anything but real estate. Istanbul, on the other hand, where we lived for months in hotels and always ate out, is a town that feels like home whenever we go back there.

Is commitment the dividing line? But expatriates are in the nature of the case uncommitted. That is their strength and, finally, their weakness. I think of Gide's word for it: *disponibilité:* open-mindedness, availability, receptiveness to all ideas, the state of being ready for anything. It is the ideal condition of the expatriate and the ultimate point of this reverie because of the moral paradox it presents. But first I must talk around it, sneak up on it, by way of food, clothes, servants, language, politics. Eventually the moral paradox will have its due.

One more distinction needs to be made: in

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affluent Western capitals the expatriate's position is almost too easy. The natives are sophisticated and ready for any American quirk. Expatriatism in Third World countries is the real challenge. Paris, London, and Rome have been absorbing American residents for generations. Henry James, Gertrude Stein, Hemingway, Eliot, and Pound are only the tip of the iceberg. More recently, Europe took in without effort the postwar floods of middle-class, middlebrow Americans, and later still the laid-back drifters of the sixties.

I first became an expatriate in Europe on my own in the 1950s and always enjoyed being a welcome outsider there. But it was not until I lived in poor countries that my conscious expatriation began. I think of expatriation as calling upon one's frontier spirit, and London, where I lived for seven years, never seemed like the frontier that Monrovia was.

In the Third World, where you are genuinely, visibly foreign, you send out signals of toleration, friendliness, admiration, and do so I think most readily and easily by the simple act of eating their food. Not in the Hilton! In huts. Eating is a sacrament, not to be trifled with, in lands where there is not enough to eat. You eat posho and fried ants in Kampala, the common beans and yucca in Antioquia. It can be risky. Eating the local food can destroy your palate for the food you left behind. Whether you eat simple baccalao or feijoada, the plain curry or tandoori, you are expressing a solidarity with the people but also acquiring a taste for hot spices that may be permanent. The poor all over the world replace quality with pepper.

Sometimes the local elite, misreading your desire, make a point of eating and serving you *your* food, usually in its most unappetizing form. It is hideously expensive, having been imported, and it is wasted on expatriates who only notice how badly it has been prepared. This serving up of rubbery steaks and rice pudding is a reverse food exoticism, practiced by your bureaucrat hosts upon you with intent to please, but above all to show their own cosmopolitanism. It is disconcerting to come up against this snobbery in the very country where you are fulfilling your own exotic longings by eating the codfish and cassava cakes that your host pretends to disdain.

Wearing the local dress is another gesture of solidarity. Dress hides but also reveals. Saris in India, shalwar kamiz in Pakistan, chador in the holy places of Iran, leather pantsuits in swinging Turkey, embroidered drawstring blouses everywhere—clothes are far more of a statement in the Third World where they are a *uniform* than in, say, London. When I arrived in London, tweed suits and strings of pearls had just about vanished, and ever since then the style has varied at three-year intervals from miniskirts to purple hair. For the expatriate in London anything goes. Even tweeds and pearls! But for the expatriate in Uganda, wearing the cotton gown with two large buttons at the clavicle cannot go unnoticed.

Why not wear the native costume? It is almost always a garment more comfortable than one's own. The bunched folds of gauze at the crotch of a pair of shalwar pants are sweat-absorbent, aerating. Shalwar is also very beautiful. It beats the rough tight denim of jeans. And it is modest. Above all, it's social. What can be more self-effacing, conciliatory, respectfully outgoing, than to give up your clothes for theirs? You are also denouncing the khaki rigidity, the floppy hats and white gloves of late imperialism.

But at the same time you are unwittingly making your difference from the natives more apparent; and, in doing so, you are taking away their right to blame. It therefore often happens that dressing up in native garb is taken ill. You will shrug off their veils and go away some day. You can do it whenever you wish. Your masquerade is resented, even as you are congratulated and thanked. It is only your Halloween costume. For them it is destiny.

They are right. There is no real surrender to their shrouded condition. A free woman in a slave's veil is just showing off. Even in the enveloping blackness of the Iranian chador, biting correctly on the hem, I knew the freckled bridge of my nose gave me away, and my blue eyes blinked through. There was a frankness of gaze I could never suppress; an aggressive posture that to the local eye was effrontery. This American woman does not stoop or sidle. She faces you. Wearing *our* veil she is only more indecent. Her independence shrieks out, humiliating our men, troubling our women, who *have* to wear that garment. And indeed, I hated the chador, a filthy thing that takes away your identity. I wore it in anger, and they knew.

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What you say at the beginning with food and clothes, you learn eventually to say in words. Expatriates take what they need of the host language, sometimes pitifully little, but they do learn more than tourists. Naturally they learn culturally related languages more readily than far-out ones. More Americans try to speak Greek in Athens than Turkish in Istanbul. Luganda has fewer takers than Swahili. What all expatriates learn well is body language, the Latin raised shoulders, the Indian twist of the wrist, the upward nod of the head that means "no" in Iran.

There is some virtue attached to trying to speak the local tongue. American diplomatic personnel and their spouses take courses in langages of host countries, a commendable effort regardless of the indifferent results. American commercial communities don't even try. The only natives they absolutely have to talk to in the local tongue are their servants, and these exchanges fall into kitchen Swahili, petit-nègre. Or they learn the English that the servant has painfully learned, and then make fun of his locutions ("Memsahib going topside, I bringing tea"). English is the world language. Nobody has to bother.

For those of us who do bother, I cannot honestly claim it as a virtue. It is only a pastime. Having daily to use a langauge not one's own is one of the pleasures of expatriation, an intellectual indulgence—almost like doing the London *Times* crossword puzzle. It releases you from your own language, permits you to guess at, if not understand, local thought patterns. But it also distracts you from serious work. And it is such a *smart* boondoggle. A mere thousand words of it leads to tea-party exchanges where we present ourselves as modest learners, and the native host is thrilled to teach us a new phrase. We are bathed in vanity. But I have to confess, I never managed to discuss anything like literature or philosophy in Farsi, and the best I ever did in Turkish or Greek was read the newspaper.

Vanity pursues the expatriate, nowhere more than among servants, who are the two-edged blessing of expatriation. There is a gamut of servant stereotypes that every expatriate knows. In a labor-intensive economy you have many servants. In modest European countries like Greece, the servant is less servile and more expensive, but you still have to have one. In rich countries you pay fantastic prices for them, prices you would never dream of paying in self-reliant America. Why? Because they are your daily bridge, your market researcher, your safety valve, your family.

But again, the distinction. That vanished breed, the perfect jewel of a char in London, was never the same kind of family as the head houseboy in Karachi. Third World servants are unnaturally devoted, and one becomes unnaturally devoted to them, overprotective, fascinated. You coddle, you overpay, you lend money, you buy presents for the baby whose godmother you become, you get a job for the brother, you write glowing recommendations, you even *tell* them you have no servants at all back in Ohio. You never use the second person singular form of address, and you consider their teeth, their insurance, their time off as scrupulously as your own.

And what do you get back? Just listen to the dreary, endless, tiresome expatriate complaints: the servants oversleep, they steal the sugar, they forget to boil the water, they quit without notice, they are embarrassed by your egalitarian overtures, they chop up the Thanksgiving turkey you paid sixty dollars for and curry it.

Do you lose faith? Do you grow cynical, indifferent, cruel, like so many local masters to their servants? No, you grow uneasy. You begin to say that the very nature of service, the servant-mistress relationship, is inherently wrong. Everybody ought to cart his own slops. You end up celebrating the message of Jean Genet's play, *The Maids*, where the dialectic of personal service is skewered forever as a social deformation. You feel like an illegitimate, usurping queen. You are guilty.

But you need servants in Karachi, and you didn't need them or want them back home. Back home you had appliances. Even when you bring your appliances with you, at enormous cost, you find that you need that personal intermediary to the marketplace in a country where even a corner store may be utterly unknown. What can you do in the Liberian jungle? It is either you or the servant facing a row of squatting women whose bandannas nod over lumps of flyblown fat, whose hands shovel nameless piles of buggy seeds.

You need servants because they help tell you where you are. I don't mean class position. I mean position as outsider. The servant

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fits in. He knows his country; he has reasonable expectations. You can learn from him better than from your local colleagues, who are all suffering from the complexities of their relation to you. The servants are not. They see you, your foreign nature, more plainly than your colleagues can.

There is a reason for it. Social encounters with opposite numbers in the Third World are as ambiguous as wearing local clothes. Your disponibility dazzles the native bureaucrat, or professor, or businessman, who is stuck in his job, his government, his religion, and cannot get out. The enormous chasm cannot be breached. It can only be filled up with small talk; only thus can he participate in your freedom. Conversations with Third World intellectuals are always bursting with good will and unspoken judgments on both sides. Ethnic comparisons are glazed over with—more superficial ethnic comparisons. At the lowest level, conversation is about shoe sizes, traffic jams; at the middle level, it is of governments (our system of checks and balances against your military dictatorship); at the highest level, it says, implicitly, we think differently from you.

Now, that last must be a worthy topic for an expatriate to broach at a Third World tea party. You would think so. But talking to foreigners about cultural ways of thinking is nearly always just another stylish pastime, like exercising your thousand words. It is not the same as actually thinking. Stylish comparisons are glittering substitutes for thought—and that is the trouble with the expatriate's social world. Style counts more than ideas.

Politics is another area where disponibility is rampant. The expatriate is released from political commitment of any kind. You can't vote in local elections. You don't pay U.S. taxes and cannot be drafted. You are usually not threatened by local revolutionaries. The outs are only after the ins. You just don't count. (In Colombia, we lived up-country, surrounded by Chuzma, revolutionaries who grew violent when they took to the jungle. They killed thousands of their compatriots every week, but never touched us.)

This safety has nearly disappeared now, as Americans abroad have become suitable targets for killing and kidnapping in many countries. Nevertheless, the expatriate himself, however endangered, is still only a bystander, a sage paring his fingernails. Sometimes, not often, the locals come to him for confirmation of their views. Opponents fight over him. He presents an Olympian detachment, utters dispassionate advice instead of endorsements. Sometimes, not often, the advice is heeded. Usually it is irrelevant.

This Olympian detachment from local politics spills over into one's own political attitudes. You go on reading the *International Herald-Tribune*, but the home issues recede. You cast an absentee ballot, but year after year there is some hitch—the mail fails, the vote is not counted. You find you play no part at all in your own politics, and this causes either political homesickness (especially when you live in countries where the locals cannot vote), or a shrugging off of all politics (especially in countries where the locals can). Man is a political animal. Falling out of politics may be the worst kind of disponibility to which expatriates are prey.

No, the worst is plainer: losing touch with home. How small and dull home looks from abroad. The rich variety of the great outside, the comfort of detachment, even the ease of living with servants, are great sirens. Expatriatism is power, freedom from all the restraints of home. One is uncommitted, yet cannot be judged. One is an exception to every rule, a freckled blond among the swarthy, a free man among slaves, a person in movement among the fixed.

Then why do expatriates yearn for home? For they do yearn for it. The paradigm is those thousands of Englishmen in colonial India who dreamed their whole lives of a rose-covered cottage in Surrey. Is it a sentimental attachment to family and clan? Patriotism, after all? Are we all, in the end, involuntary exiles? Surely we voluntary ones long for home in another way. We *chose* to go. We are where we want to be. Is our homesickness a theatrical pose, just another facet of our disponibility?

Well, there is uneasiness in expatriatism. One feels the need to justify. One wonders, in living the dream of the exotic, is one in bad faith? Is disponibility more than an absence of commitment? Is it an abdication? The expatriate knows he has left unfinished business at home—namely, the life he did not live. A

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basic form of reality has been eluded. Somehow one ought to pay.

And one does pay. The expatriate life is eventually felt to be meaningless. One is not representative of anything. One has merely escaped. As the confirmed bachelor, pleased with his natty leather and electronic equipment, despises the joys of marriage and parenthood, yet fears what he is missing and also fears the pity of his married friends, so the expatriate suspects he is really out in the cold and not at all envied by the stay-at-homes, or even by the tourists who come to visit him.

Beyond freedom there is a secret nostalgia for boundaries, a reverence for old habits and habitats. Colored by the sadness of lost youth, home becomes a beacon, the single place where you always belonged, the envelope of generations, the parents and the children who shared this place, this house, this neighborhood. Under their savoir vivre, expatriates wistfully think about immortality and know that they will not have it in foreign parts.

They could. They could be Mother Teresa, or Albert Schweitzer, or Dante, or El Greco. But most of us, trivialized by floating freedom, have that very triviality to fight. Having only ourselves to be true to, we look for home and laws.

I have a friend in Ankara who says, "True expatriates never do go home." I want to shoot this remark down. It says, in essence, "When expatriates go home, they will always think of their other worlds. And the home folks, sensing this, will always mistrust them, refuse to listen to their tales, be impatient with their acquired mannerisms and accents, find their souvenirs ugly and cumbersome." Repatriated expatriates pose a threat. They are most welcome when they repudiate their years abroad as a bad dream, an aberration.

And expatriates themselves agree. That is the paradox that makes me think of the ending of Rimbaud's *Bateau Ivre*. The buffets and delights of worldwide experience are nothing to the puddle in a narrow street where a child sailed a paper boat, in homely sadness, long ago, yearning for the open sea.

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How Good Is John Ashbery?

ROBERT McDOWELL

So I live with this paradox: on the one hand, I am an important poet, read by younger writers, and on the other hand, nobody understands me. I am often asked to account for this state of affairs, but I can't.

—John Ashbery

John Ashbery is a winner. In the small, clubby world of contemporary poetry, he has published ten volumes of poetry since 1955 and received a Yale Younger Poets Prize, two Guggenheim Fellowships, a Pulitzer Prize, fellowships from the Academy of American Poets and the Merrill Foundation, a National Book Award, a position as Distinguished Professor at a New York university, a National Book Critics Circle Award, membership in the National Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters and the National Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a MacArthur Prize Fellowship. Only the deceased (and not many among them) may claim comparable expressions of public gratitude.

America loves a winner. The beleaguered American Academy, taking its cue from the winner-producing machinery of sports and popular culture, sees its salvation in its ability to create winners in literature. As long as there are "great" writers, so the reasoning goes, there will be "great" literature. "Great" literature is attended by the need for dedicated study and explication, and this necessity validates the Academy's mission. If John Ashbery did not exist, one might almost say, the Academy would have to invent him. In the sense that he has been more widely honored than any contemporary poet, he is our "greatest" living example of someone who wins with poetry.

The harrowing problems and pressures this status exerts on Ashbery must be enormous; it affects others among us who are poets too. For given Ashbery's ascendancy, what are we to make of our poetic climate? One pervasive message, delivered by the American Academy, and frequently by publishers as well, is that once the star-making machinery clicks on, it generates an enthusiasm that often approaches hysteria. An atmosphere of sober judgment evaporates. Poets who also write criticism must examine their roles in helping to create this carnival atmosphere. In each case, we must ask ourselves if we promote poetry or a personality, and we must be aware of the dangerous, exotic lure of giddy endorsement for its own sake.

Given this warning, it is appropriate to recall that every new volume published by John Ashbery has been widely praised, probed, pumped up, or put down by a host of critics and reviewers. This prodigious soap opera in prose ranges from the unequivocal enthusiasm of Richard Howard, Laurence Lieberman, and David Shapiro to the exasperation of James Fenton and Robert Boyers; the sparsely populated middle ground of calm evaluation is best exemplified by Marjorie Perloff, Ashbery's best sympathetic critic. Out of all of this attention, two dominant opinions of Ashbery's worth as a poet have emerged: 1) his is the poetry of obscurity and boredom, which ought not to be taken seriously; 2) his is the poetry of genius that creates "new" ways

ROBERT McDOWELL's book of poetry, *Quiet Money*, is forthcoming from Henry Holt & Company. He is an associate editor of CTB/McGraw-Hill in Monterey, California.

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of imagining and "new" ways of expression for a "new" audience, and which must be taken very seriously indeed.

It is relatively easy to disprove the first opinion; it usually is when confronting pronouncements from the criticism of dismissal. Ashbery's poetry *is* sometimes boring, but so is much of the poetry written by everybody else. However, Ashbery's poetry is seldom obscure. His obsessions are clear enough, and his poems express them repeatedly in English that is not too hard to follow. Furthermore, in the volumes up to and including *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror,* Ashbery was the dominant figure in the revival of a historical channel in our poetry's tradition. To dismiss the poems, to refuse to take them seriously on some level, would be foolish if not stupid.

In the same sense that we ought not to dismiss Ashbery, we might turn a calm, critical eye on the second popular opinion. I am not sure that I know of a single poet or critic among us who would readily recognize the "poetry of genius." The "new" ways of imagining in Ashbery's poetry are found extensively in the literature of psychology and philosophy, and in poetry, Stevens and Auden in particular come to mind as intellectual precursors. The "new" methods of expression have a number of precursors in poetry—Stevens, Auden, Traherne, Browne, Reverdy, Rimbaud. Here we might correctly consider that the words *genius* and *new* are related to *great*—a trilogy of blitz-glitz words borrowed from show business. They represent the other side of the attitude that inspires the criticism of complete dismissal, and both ought properly to be discredited. The publication of Ashbery's *Selected Poems* marks the occasion of another season of strong debate about this poet, and it offers yet another opportunity for sober evaluation of a kind that can perhaps take Ashbery's true measure.

"Not *what* one dreams but *how*—this is Ashbery's subject." This assertion by Marjorie Perloff is accurate and useful in making sense of the body of John Ashbery's work. Examining poem after poem, we find that Ashbery is making the same case over and over. In it he demands that the audience perceive reality in alternate ways by denying the referential nature of language. Couplings of rhythms and images are deliberately sabotaged to create new meanings, which reflect the happenstance significance of the world of dreams.

This is an admirable goal in theory, and since the mid-seventies such young poets as Alfred Corn, John Yau, Jorie Graham, and others have followed Ashbery's lead, making the shadow-mind their special subject. At their best, all of these poets have succeeded in creating moments of linguistic epiphany in which a new connection becomes, for the reader, surprise reality. And no one has succeeded more ably in this endeavor than Ashbery himself.

But there is a catch. It resides at the root of the linguistic theory that makes such poetry possible. Specifically, no poet or critic promoting the poetry of discontinuity has successfully argued the diminished significance of referentiality in language. Instead they have unquestioningly embraced the disastrous assumption that the powers of language are inherently equal. Thus, they hold that discontinuous poetry is equal in power to referential poetry. But language is not a utopian system that makes its resources available to any creature that grunts. Marjorie Perloff, by association, attempts to dispel the popular notion that Ashbery's discontinuous poems are abstract by calling attention to the "network of representational traces" in Picasso and Gertrude Stein, but she fails to prove that Ashbery's network of traces transmits as well. Furthermore, Perloff is right to expose the contention that Ashbery strives to eliminate meaning; she warns us against regarding meaning "as some sort of fixed quantity (like two pounds of sugar or a dozen eggs)." But, again, she does not go far enough.

I am willing to grant the poet his alternative meaning and learn from it if I can; I am not convinced that *alternatives* equals *meaning* any more or less than fixed quantities do. Taken to its extreme, the argument for discontinuity in poetry allows for any form of writing to be called poetry. When referentiality is banished from poetry, so is restraint. The result is a loss in the power of language. In order to offset this loss, Ashbery and others of his school attempt to retain some referential threads that most often resemble stage directions—an announced progression of time, a brief description of setting or character, an anecdote. Poetry that holds to this practice has been accurately put into the category of par-

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ody by Northrop Frye: "The prose element in the diction and syntax is so strong that the features of verse still remaining give it the effect of continuous parody. This is the area of intentional doggerel. . . . Here again, as with euphemism, we are moving in an atmosphere of paradox, and also discontinuity."

One needn't have read Frye to notice the overwhelming prose element in Ashbery's diction and syntax. One need only consider a chunk of his lines, such as these from his famous poem "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror," in which the narrator reflects on the gaze of Parmigianino:

> . . . the soul is not a soul,
> Has no secret, is small, and it fits
> Its hollow perfectly: its rooms, our moment of attention.
> That is the tune but there are no words.
> The words are only speculation
> (From the Latin *speculum*, mirror):
> They seek and cannot find the meaning of the music.

It is impossible to analyze the movement of these lines as poetry; their rhythm is that of chatty prose. The speaker is delivering a lecture, a familiar lesson, and in his zeal to link what he considers to be complicated ideas, he begins to rely on imagistic leaps familiar in poetry. Defenders of this poem will point to the progression of words becoming speculation, becoming mirror, then becoming something active (again)—something capable of seeking (eyes? a gaze?)—as inspired examples of metaphor. I find them to be examples of mixed metaphor. The parenthetical line, perhaps intended to create irony, awkwardly aids the leap from the *speculation* to *mirror;* it is also prim and self-congratulatory, trotting out the narrator's learning and cleverness.

The *meaning* of the music. . . . It *is* elusive, perhaps, but not as elusive as the making of the music itself. Ashbery's lyric success, in the example above and elsewhere, is minimal. In this he is not alone. At least one generation of American poets, the generation that came to maturity in the fifties, has forgotten that the finest lyric poetry in English relied on simple direct speech. If one must be convinced, I suggest renewed contemplation of Yeats's lyric poems. Today, most poets, critics, and reviewers mistake awkward, mannered speech for lyricism and consign direct speech to the province of prose. This is sadly misguided, and it has much to do with poetry's already small audience shrinking even further.

What John Ashbery does best is to parody the act of writing poems. His fondness for abstract nouns and shifting pronouns is well documented, but little has been said about the temperament of the man who is so fond of these discontinuous devices. To begin with, here is Ashbery himself: "I guess I don't have a very strong sense of my own identity and I find it very easy to move from one person in the sense of a pronoun to another and this again helps to produce a kind of polyphony in my poetry which I again feel is a means toward a greater naturalism." This absence of a "strong sense of identity" accounts for the lack of notable characters in Ashbery's poetry. It also explains in part the difficulty in gauging the character of the poet himself. Instead, we must be content with watching him struggle to turn a fatal weakness into a strength, which he almost never does. Thus it becomes absolutely clear why Ashbery squeamishly veers from the referential realm, where characters are essential and character must assert itself if language is to achieve a powerful effect on the reader. Secure in his discontinuous universe, Ashbery repeatedly expresses contempt for our moment in history by systematically denying consequence. Without it, events slosh in and out of one another, continuing without end, as in these lines from "Pyrography":

> If this is the way it is let's leave,
> They agree, and soon the slow boxcar journey begins,
> Gradually accelerating until the gyrating fans of suburbs
> Enfolding the darkness of cities are remembered
> Only as a recurring tic. And midway
> We meet the disappointed, returning one, without its
> Being able to stop us in the headlong night
> Toward the nothing of the coast. At Bolinas
> The houses doze and seem to wonder why through the
> Pacific haze, and the dreams alternately glow and grow dull.
> Why be hanging on here? Like kites, circling,
> Slipping on a ramp of air, but always circling?
>
> But the variable cloudiness is pouring it on,
> Flooding back to you like the meaning of a joke.

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The land wasn't immediately appealing; we built it
Partly over with fake ruins, in the image of
ourselves: . . .

Every image summons up the negative. Critics are observed in "darkness" and remembered as "recurring tic"; an individual is "disappointed"; dreams "glow and grow dull"; the land is not "appealing," so we construct "fake ruins, in the image of ourselves." The bitterness cloaked in mannered utterance is still bitterness. Redemption, for the poet, comes only in the act of assembling his discontinuous catalogue.

Another example occurs in Ashbery's poem "Litany":

You were a secretary at first until it
Came time to believe you and then the
black man
Replaced your headlights with fuel
You seemed to grow from no place.

If we met these lines in the work of any other writer, wouldn't we call it mixed metaphor? If we were charitable, wouldn't we call it strained surrealism? In Ashbery, it is often referred to as "genius."

This passage (among innumerable others) persuades one that it is, not in assertion, but in tone that so much of Ashbery's work is derogatory when it attempts to examine individual American character types. Ultimately, it does not matter that one prefers the poetry of the city over that of the farm, the poetry of the village over that of the small town. At their best, these diverse poetries share one essential element—a governing sense of community. This is what convinces us of a poem's value. Even if the poet's focus is inwardly directed, his language and point of view acknowledge a larger reality in which all of us play a part. Without this sense of community, a poem's audience evaporates, its dialogue falls silent. Without it the poet settles for the role of a lost and lonely individual who talks only to himself.

This is Ashbery's most severe handicap as a poet, and it is nowhere more obvious than in "Daffy Duck in Hollywood," which is based on the famous Chuck Jones "capic" (cartoon epic). In the animated short, Daffy is repeatedly erased and redrawn. With each new appearance, in guises he sometimes approves of, sometimes not, he must work his way out of a serious crisis. Ashbery uses this cinematic springboard (frequently, he turns to film for *subjects*, not *effects*, as has been inaccurately posited) to dive into an examination of appearances—how we look, how others appear to us—and their ramifications. Jones's work is more successful, which is not to suggest that Ashbery was mistaken in trying to write the poem. However, the poem should stake out its own ground, making the reader forget its precursor. The poem ought to be as funny, visual, and disturbing as the capic. In the latter, theme is powerfully understated; in the former, it is plainly announced again and again with all the force of a buried headline:

All life is but a figment; conversely, the tiny
Tome that slips from your hand is not perhaps the
Missing link in this invisible picnic whose
leverage
Shrouds our sense of it.

"Reading Ashbery's text," Marjorie Perloff has written, "is thus rather like overhearing a conversation in which one catches an occasional word or phrase but cannot make out what the speakers are talking about. . . . And yet one does keep listening. For the special pleasure . . . is that disclosure of some special meaning seems perpetually imminent." This describes the motivation of the eavesdropper, or the participant in gossip, or the casual reader-skimmer of the newspaper. All of us must answer for ourselves whether or not this accurately describes what we hope to experience by reading poetry.

It would be difficult for John Ashbery to answer this question. He makes a point of avoiding answers whenever possible. Based on the poems in the current volume, one might guess that his favorite word is *perhaps*. Ashbery plays to the word's suggestion of doubt and possibility, but the poems give no indication that their sensibility understands *consequence* in the word itself. Again, this is a problem of temperament as much as craft, and nothing calls our attention to it like the absence of notable characters. Even when Ashbery gives more than his usual glancing attention to narrative, he fails to develop such characters. His are instead all stereotypes, the sort of secondary people we expect to meet in some less-than-first-rate fiction. All of them resemble, in the snapshot glimpses of them we are allowed, the framed photo of the aged mother's banker son in "The Instruction

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The 1986 Phi Beta Kappa Book Awards

The Phi Beta Kappa Award in Science

THE MYSTERY OF COMETS. *Fred L. Whipple. Smithsonian Institution Press. $24.95.*

Citation: *The Mystery of Comets* clearly succeeds in its basic task of making a segment of modern science intelligible to a wide audience. In it Fred L. Whipple has given us a simple, clear, yet totally captivating and intriguing account (liberally and effectively illustrated) of the growth of human experience and knowledge of comets. Presented as a linear mystery story, the book proceeds from the awe and fear engendered by comets as recorded in early texts, to the early theories on the nature of comets, and on into modern times, revealing how Dr. Whipple and his colleagues in contemporary astronomy grapple with the mysteries of comets. This is a distinctly careful and measured book, written with the full force of Fred L. Whipple's depth of experience and knowledge. *The Mystery of Comets* stands out as best exemplifying a work that sees science as a part of a more general human quest for knowledge and understanding.

The Christian Gauss Award

ALEXANDER POPE: A LIFE. *Maynard Mack. Norton $22.50.*

Citation: *Alexander Pope: A Life*, which the author, in his preface, modestly insists is not more than an "attempt . . . to give a comprehensive account of the man in his times," is a work of breadth and depth, saturated with learning, that is bound to stand as the definitive biography of its subject for the foreseeable future. The author has attempted, and succeeded in giving us, much more than "a life." He has made Alexander Pope come alive by bringing the age itself to life. Without being any the less an absorbing biography of a major poet, the book is a compendium of the manners and mores, the virtues and foibles of an age. Professor Mack's analysis of Pope's poetry in the context of its classical sources enables even the casual reader to understand exactly what it means to call the first half of the eighteenth century the Neo-classical Age. What Professor Mack says about Pope's discovery of Erasmian virtues, and his adaptation of these virtues as ". . . his own preferred model of Catholic behavior," may well be applied to Professor Mack's biography, for though the book is an exhaustive scholarly work, yet it is one that never loses sight of the Erasmian virtues of "tolerance, moderation, civility, and wit, together with a learning lightly worn."

The Ralph Waldo Emerson Award

THE WORLD OF THOUGHT IN ANCIENT CHINA. *Benjamin Schwartz. Harvard University Press. $27.50.*

Citation: Benjamin Schwartz's *The World of Thought in Ancient China* is an elegant and incisive analysis of Chinese ideas about the world and humanity's place in it. It is a scholarly book of the highest order, the mature work of a major scholar that exhibits thorough research and vast erudition. It is beautifully and effectively written. Benjamin Schwartz's concern is for texts and explication of texts: Confucian, Taoist, Legalist, Mohist, and the rest. He sees these texts as the product of an emergent class of intellectuals who both criticized and shared popular culture on the one hand, and official court culture on the other. Their views were diverse, often flatly contradictory, yet exhibit a residue of shared cultural assumptions that shaped Chinese thought down to the present day. Benjamin Schwartz has spent a lifetime seeking to understand the Chinese classics in their own terms and to find adequate ways of expressing their meaning in English. His account of Chinese ideas in *The World of Thought in Ancient China* is elegant, clear, and altogether convincing.

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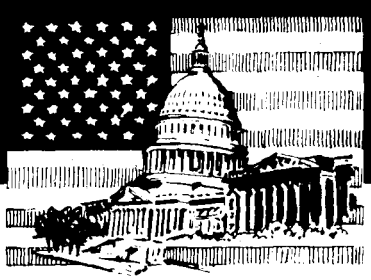

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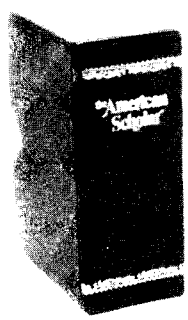

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Manual": ". . . a dark-skinned lad with pearly teeth grins out at us from the worn leather frame." The strategy of discontinuity prohibits any deeper insight.

In an essay written several years ago, Laurence Lieberman accurately observed that "Ashbery's career has vacillated between two poles, two opposite aesthetics—the rage to leave everything out, the rage to put everything back in." But this vacillation might be wholly intentional—a clever gambit by which the poet masks a fundamental dearth of subject matter. Interpreted in this way, Ashbery's work chillingly exemplifies Parmigianino's "life-obstructing task" in every line. As Ashbery himself put it, his goal has been to write "as though an argument were suddenly derailed and something that started out clearly suddenly becomes opaque. . . . What I am probably trying to do is to illustrate opacity and how it can suddenly descend over us, rather than trying to be willfully obscure."

The method is not difficult to analyze. Whereas a poet preoccupied with images will build his poem through a sequence of images to an earned generalization, Ashbery will reverse this movement; he begins with generalization, then rambles on until the *language of generality* (not to be confused with the language of philosophy) suggests an image. Consider these lines from "A Wave" (italics mine):

. . . everything, in short,
That makes this explicit earth what it appears to
be in our
Glassiest moments when a *canoe shoots out from*
under some foliage
Into the river and finds its calm . . .

Occasionally, Ashbery drops the form of poetry altogether and attempts to write poetic prose philosophy. "The System" and "A Wave" are prime examples, and in these poems he is most unashamedly himself, a writer for whom "our landscape" is always "partially out of focus, some of it too near." These pieces, generated by a vague desire to reconcile opposites, have less in common with a dream book than with a psychoanalytic daybook in which syntax is swept away by its own cuteness and hypothesis is overwhelmed by self-satisfaction.

It may be true that in the poetry of ideas the poetry pales as the ideas achieve an ever more suffocating lock on the poet's imagination. When this occurs, the poetry of ideas becomes the poetry of poses. In Ashbery's case, the poetry repeatedly sets us up; because nothing matters, it seldom delivers resolutions of consequence. Without the hope of consequence and threads running to it, there is no significant communication. The poet who denies consequence becomes the man absorbed in his crossword puzzle as his train pulls away, leaving him behind in the station.

If we embrace the discontinuous system of which Ashbery is so fond, seeing our lives as little more than random splotches of color, we merely play a passive part in replacing one system—the system reference—with an even less satisfying one that seeks to preserve the romanticized past. John Ashbery is no fool. He is as much a cultural naysayer as Allen Ginsberg, which is to say that he is no naysayer at all. Like Ginsberg, Ashbery is successful and comfortable, his success and comfort maintained by institutions of the very culture he purports in his poetry to despise. What in his youth was a legitimate critical-poetic attack against cultural conditions that begrude change has become, in late middle age, mannered and inaccurate repetition.

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"Perhaps we ought to feel with more imagination," he writes. Perhaps we ought to imagine with more feeling, one might retort. John Ashbery's discontinuous experiments were all carried out by the middle of the last decade. Succeeding books confirm that they are played out. Now the Academy, with characteristic sluggishness, rises to honor and explain them. This complicated process has nothing to do with poetry.

The Armed Vision

A HISTORY OF MODERN CRITICISM, 1750–1950. Volume 5: ENGLISH CRITICISM, 1900–1950; Volume 6: AMERICAN CRITICISM, 1900–1950. *By René Wellek. Yale University Press. $22.50 per volume.*

Reviewed by EMERSON R. MARKS

With his fifth and sixth volumes, respectively on British and American literary criticism during the first half of this century, Professor René Wellek brings to near completion what was originally planned as a four-volume account of Western literary thought since 1750. A final, seventh volume will treat twentieth-century Continental critics.

Literary criticism being an unmanageably inclusive subject, Wellek's survey is properly confined to the ample range of literary speculation lying between aesthetic theory and technical poetics (prosody, fictional technique, dramaturgy), with the occasional glances in both directions inevitable in a composite discipline with notoriously permeable internal partitions. Even thus delimited, the field embraces, especially after 1900, probably the most voluminous and heterogeneous body of critical writing on record. Fortunately, René Wellek possesses in superb measure the combination of learning and analytical acumen needed to chronicle and assess its legacy.

From the outset, this signal enterprise has been guided by a conception of its materials and a methodology that Wellek has often expounded. His model for the former derives from Hegel's distinction between a history of philosophy and political history. Though dated in their inception, critical texts, like Hegel's philosophic systems, persist in the present. The battle of Waterloo is an event forever past, but Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, published two years later, remains for our direct scrutiny and judgment. Wellek easily rejects the figment of a "neutral" history, as impossible as it is undesirable since the historian's very selection of critics and titles is an evaluative act.

The question of methodology is less easily decided. Here no earlier model was helpful. There was Ferdinand Brunetière, who in 1890 tried to adapt Darwinian evolution to literary history and declared in his *Évolution des genres dans l'histoire de la Littérature* that, if criticism has a history, its current specimens must differ from older ones—that is, must have *evolved* (Brunetière's emphasis). There was also *Geistesgeschichte*, according to which cultural periods are shaped by forces unique within each of them and therefore incommensurable. Neither of these deterministic theories, Wellek saw, could serve his turn. Unlike biological species, older critical ideas are not inevitably superseded by those that come later. Although for a time Wellek had hoped to work out some more suitable scheme of internal development, by 1973 he had to confess that all attempts at evolutionary literary history, including his own, had failed. In *The Attack on Literature and Other Essays* (1982), he reports his discovery by personal experience that the history of criticism follows no evolutionary order, but constitutes instead "a series of debates on recurrent concepts . . . permanent problems . . . with us even today." In fact, as he declares in the work under review, one function of such a history is to demonstrate that "what has been touted as a new discovery has been said many times over before."

These assertions might suffice of themselves to preclude any evasion of judgment. In any case, Wellek continues to write as one convinced, as he put it in an earlier volume of this *History*, "of the truth of several doctrines and the error of others." Yet not the least remarkable quality of his performance all

EMERSON R. MARKS is professor emeritus of English at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. His most recent book is *Coleridge on the Language of Verse*, and his work has appeared in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *Sewanee Review*, *Kenyon Review*, *Yale Review*, and other publications.

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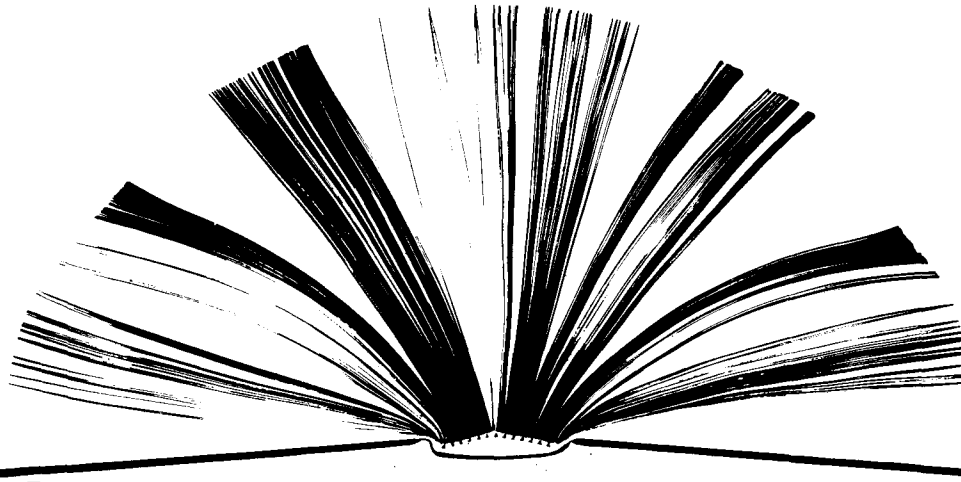

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along is how little his own theoretical position has detracted from the objectivity and even-handedness of his presentation. His appraisals, moreover, are supported either by explicit argument or by the reader's silent reference to a set of norms readily inferable from the terms of his account. These last comprise a "core of convictions" spelled out in an address of personal stocktaking that Wellek delivered at Yale in 1978:

> that the aesthetic experience differs from other experiences and sets off the realm of art, of fictionality, of *Schein*, from life; that the literary work of art, while a linguistic construct, at the same time refers to the world outside; that it cannot therefore be described only by linguistic means but has a meaning telling of man, society, and nature; that all arguments for relativism meet a final barrier; that we are confronted, as students of literature, with an object, the work of art, out there (whatever may be its ultimate ontological status) which challenges us to understand and interpret it; that there is thus no complete liberty of interpretation. *(The Attack on Literature)*

This critical credo highlights the radically altered climate of opinion that greets the appearance of this latest installment of Wellek's *History*. Whereas in 1955 and still in 1965, the dates of the earlier paired volumes, these four principles were widely endorsed or at least (excepting the anti-relativism) largely uncontested, today they are all systematically opposed and often passionately denounced by the most influential purveyors of what passes for literary theory in our graduate schools. Paradoxically, this may be a good thing since it seems to be a quirk of intellectual history that the momentary suppression of sound doctrines is a condition for their later resuscitation by the very process that Wellek discerns in the past.

The organization of the present volumes is roughly symmetrical. In each, five chapters on critical groups like the Symbolists in England or the New Humanists in America are followed by others devoted to individual critics. A significant deviation is a separate chapter in Volume 6 on the New Criticism just preceding those on the eight men habitually identified as its proponents: John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren, R. P. Blackmur, Kenneth Burke, Yvor Winters, and William K. Wimsatt. The label, apparently taken from Ransom's *The New Criticism* (1941), is unfortunate if only because it obscures differences among them sometimes amounting to the starkest contrasts in theory and practice. Even Tate, Brooks, Warren, and Wimsatt, who largely agree on fundamentals, are seldom in full concurrence, while Burke, a writer virtually sui generis in any case, diverges sharply from all the rest. On the other hand, T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards, discussed in Volume 5, are on important issues their allies, as in other and less vital ways are F. R. Leavis and William Empson. Wellek's division of his material by nationality, a departure from his earlier procedure explained in the preface, fortunately does not suppress the links among them because, in his thorough analyses, the Americans' transatlantic affiliations emerge as clearly as their native accords and discrepancies.

The separate chapter on the New Criticism points up a notable change of authorial stance in these new volumes. Here, more overtly than before, Wellek the historian is joined by Wellek the advocate. He ably defends the New Critics against four "accusations": that they are art-for-art's-sake formalists; that they neglect literature's social setting; that they seek to assimilate criticism to natural science; and that they write as pedagogues, their close readings being merely a version of French *explication de texte*. Wellek's vindication is enriched, beyond his 1950 terminus, by deft and accurate sketches of the more recent critical schools that have occasioned much of the disparagement. Those who know the work of Tate, Brooks, and Wimsatt may well share Wellek's uncertainty whether the accusers have in every case actually read what they denigrate. Certainly their objections are not all of equal weight. (The last can hardly have been made by a reader of Brooks's *Well Wrought Urn* with firsthand experience of *explication de texte*.) Nonetheless, Wellek meets with his usual informed arguments not only those dissenters he respects, like Northrop Frye and Gérard Genette, but even the prophets of what he neatly dubs the "new apocalyptic irrationalism."

Dealing with the twentieth century, Wellek himself is necessarily part of the story, not so much for his personal influence on literary studies as because, before arriving in the United States, he had reached theoretical positions later espoused by his American associates. Several of them are or were his friends

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and three of them Yale colleagues. With others, like Leavis and Lionel Trilling, to whom he devotes a chapter of admirably discriminating appreciation, he has had public disagreements. If this condition affects his habitual impartiality, it is hard to detect. It in no way dilutes his generous appraisal of writers whose doctrines are alien to his own—witness the balanced discussion of J. M. Murry, G. W. Knight, and the other English "New Romantics," and of Richards, Leavis, and Edmund Wilson. Neither does it blunt his candor. His New Critical friends are censured for what he considers a serious limitation: "They are extremely anglo-centric, even provincial."

A further challenge not faced earlier is that Wellek's choice and ranking of critics had to be made without the comforting sanction of time, the one verdict to which even the self-assured Samuel Johnson invariably deferred. Considering the shrunken modern reputation of, for example, Sainte-Beuve, whose literary portraits Matthew Arnold and later men like Paul Elmer More in America revered as the acme of the critic's art, one can't help wondering how far future historians will confirm Wellek's modern canon. There is of course no sure telling. Yet I would argue that those critics whom Wellek rates highly for their essential conformity to his "core of convictions" have a better than even chance for survival. The reason is not so much that those convictions answer to Wellek's and many other people's literary-aesthetic experience, which they assuredly do, as that the principles they encapsulate derive from history itself, where they recur in ever-fresh formulations. Since in our century and language they have been most memorably articulated by T. S. Eliot, Wellek's estimate that he is "by far the most important critic of the twentieth century in the English-speaking world" bids fair to outlast the downgrading of Eliot now fashionable in certain quarters. A similar insurance underwrites Wellek's faith that New Critical theory will have to be reaffirmed in the future precisely because of its current invalidation.

In so multifarious a work, even the most congenial reader must stop short of blanket approval. Some are sure to question Wellek's allotment of space or to doubt points of his argument. I am personally not sure Empson rates a whole chapter. Nor am I quite persuaded that Ransom's and Tate's cognitive theories are reducible to Eliot's unified sensibility; or that Eliot's distinction of moral and aesthetic literary qualities necessarily splits form from content. But these are minute reservations.

For people who relish intellectual history, Wellek's *Modern Criticism* is as absorbing to read as it is instructive. In small part that is because, though serious, he is never solemn. He can delight in the whimsical or the absurd, such as Wilson's belief that electric lighting killed the ghost story as a genre, or Yvor Winters's assertion that England produced little notable poetry during the past 250 years. But there is a more basic reason for Wellek's allure. It lies in the way he employs his astonishing wealth of reading in several literatures and languages. It produces the very opposite of pedantry. His erudition never bores or intimidates, because the great mass of commentary he so readily commands never obstructs his immediate view of the critical texts themselves. Rather it serves to "arm the vision," as Coleridge has it, by which he inspects, with all the verve of fresh discovery, his primary material.

Bildungsbürgertum

GERMAN JEWS BEYOND JUDAISM. *By George L. Mosse. Indiana University Press and Hebrew Union College Press. $20. Paper, $7.95.*

Reviewed by RUTH GAY

The German Jewish past has wandered like a restless ghost through the history books of the last half century—now one feature, now another seized upon and described. But the whole portrait has yet to be drawn, and its absence is a reflection of the divided and sometimes hostile views toward that past. In America there have been excellent scholarly monographs on aspects of its history, but the topic has never captured the popular imagination, and for a very good reason. The overwhelming majority of American Jews are of East European origin and since the end of World War II have been absorbed in the dual

RUTH GAY's essays have appeared in *Commentary, Dialogue, Horizon,* and other magazines.

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work of recapturing their own past and in the never-completed mourning for those who were killed in the camps. Their interest in the German Jews, therefore, has oscillated in the last decades somewhere between indifference and antipathy. For others, German Jewish history is submerged in German history, suddenly achieving an overwhelming significance in the Hitler period.

Thus, the story of what happened to the Jews in Germany has landed in the province of the specialist—that is, apart from the succession of biographies, single or collective, of the stars of the 1933 migration, or work directly related to Nazism and the camps. The plight of the eight hundred Jews on the *St. Louis,* the last ship out of Germany, who were turned back from Cuba in June 1939 was dramatic enough for a film. The television series on the Holocaust also lifted the German Jewish community briefly into public notice. But its pre-Hitler past is hardly known.

In Germany since 1945—the year Zero, as it is called there—German Jewish history has had a different odyssey, beginning with the long silence of the post-war years that enveloped the Nazi period in general. The first break came in the revolutionary sixties when scholarly and popular books began to explore both the remote and recent past of Jews in Germany, and autobiographies or memoirs found an inexhaustible market. In 1970 Bernt Engelmann, a crusading journalist and leftist critic of German society, published his aggressive *Deutschland Ohne Juden (Germany Without Jews),* which was at once a reminder that the dangers of the past were not over and an accounting of the talent that Germany had lost. An appendix of twenty-eight pages consists simply of lists of distinguished German Jews who had emigrated in the 1930s.

Since Engelmann's book was published, a new generation of German scholars has come to the fore as interest in this aspect of the German past has increased. There is also now a generation of young Germans who have grown up without ever having seen a Jew. For them the Jews are an exotic chapter in the German past, but they also evoke a sense of national shame. Like Engelmann, this new generation sees the missing Jewish community as a kind of lost treasure. To what would be the chagrin of the idealists of that old community, however, they are still not Germans, but eternally "Jews," Jews who performed a remarkable function in Germany with their energy, their talent, their originality. In the new admiring tone of the eighties, they are still called the "yeast of the people," as they were by Rahel Varnhagen, the brilliant talker who presided over one of the celebrated Jewish salons in Berlin in the 1790s. Yet however flattering the intention, the compliment defeats the Enlightenment ideal of perfect equality, in which differences would be obliterated and Jews would no longer be set apart. The memory of such aims and hopes is all but lost. The Jews are now recollected as a people who came and were destroyed, whose monuments, synagogues, and cemeteries dot the German landscape as an irreducible reminder of their life on earth. But they have become strangers to contemporary Germany. In this context George Mosse's new study, originally presented as the Efroymson Lectures at Hebrew Union College, makes a statement important to the perspectives on both sides of the Atlantic.

German Jews Beyond Judaism is a small book that analyzes a very large idea, the sustaining idea, in fact, of the German Jewish community in the century and a half that saw its emergence into the modern world and its ultimate dispersion and destruction. George Mosse, whose previous works have traced the forces that contributed to the extinction of the Jews—racism, "volkism," anti-Semitism, right-wing politics, and, most recently, the uses and abuses of sexuality (*Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe,* Howard Fertig, 1985)—offers in *German Jews Beyond Judiasm* a moving elegy to the ideals of this now defunct community. In this lucidly argued book, Mosse has taken up the discussion at its most sensitive point. His thesis, which he demonstrates both elegantly and convincingly, begins by showing that the precepts of the Enlightenment—individualism, rationality, humanity—were extended in Germany by the ideal of self-cultivation, which meant a continual, open-minded quest for knowledge. An involvement with high culture that had previously been the exclusive plaything of the aristocracy became in the nineteenth century an integral part of bourgeois life, summed up in the German word for the cultivated bourgeoisie—*Bildungsbürgertum.*

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This volume of *Shaw*, dealing with pieces of lesser prominence in the canon, aims to enrich our sense of the range and depth of Shaw's achievement as a playwright. Fresh perspectives are offered on two dozen full-length and shorter plays and on the playwright himself — who is revealed to be a far more self-conscious modernist than is usually supposed. 376 pages $25.00

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The core of Mosse's thesis is that the new Jewish middle class was the practitioner par excellence of these virtues and, in fact, remained faithful to them when, in the last quarter of the century, the rest of the German bourgeoisie was caught up by the tides of anti-Semitism and nationalism that eroded "the common ground between the German and the German-Jewish *Bildungsbürgertum.*" But it was not only that these changing ideals drew the Jews and non-Jews apart. The paroxysm of patriotism that swept over Germany culminating in World War I also led to what Mosse calls "the narrowing horizons of Jewish life." Even the postwar Weimar period, which many historians regard as a triumphal period of Jewish acceptance in German life, Mosse treats rather skeptically by suggesting that it may have been only an "inner Jewish dialogue," since the growing power of right-wing forces in Germany at the same time actually led to an ever-increasing isolation of the German Jewish bourgeoisie.

While German Jews absorbed and made German culture their own, they did not give up, as Mosse shows, their distinctive Jewish culture but created a new synthesis from the materials of their own past with the ideas of the Enlightenment. *Bildung* in its universalism became the instrument by which they could establish their religion in a new secular national context. Even Orthodox Jews, such as Samson Raphael Hirsch, were imbued with the ideals of the Enlightenment. Hirsch went so far as to claim that the source of these ideas was "in Jewish thought and values 'which,' as he put it, 'sang their way into the hearts of the German people.' "

The imperishable image in Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* of the three rings, representing the three ultimately indistinguishable religions, became the key idea for the German Jews because it placed their religion on an exact footing with Christianity. This was a major advance over the hypothesis long held, even among well-disposed Christians, that Judaism was merely the forerunner of Christianity and that the logical religious progression for Judaism was to move from the Old Testament to the New. German Judaism clung to this metaphor of Lessing's into its darkest days. When, in 1933, the Jews in Germany began to be excluded from cultural life, they formed their own cultural organization, the Kulturbund Deutscher Juden. Its first production was *Nathan the Wise*. By 1938 Nathan joined the Jews in their cultural exile, since the play was banned from the German stage.

The core of Mosse's book is his examination of German Jewish life in the three areas where Jews were most visible: in German popular culture, in the world of scholarship, and in left-wing politics. Using two popular writers—Emil Ludwig and Stefan Zweig—whose biographies and novels sold in the millions during the inter-war period, Mosse points out how little followed from the consumption of their books. Although both of these writers were quintessentially Jews in their emphasis on the individual, in their advocacy of reason, and in much else, in the end what seems to have remained was that they wrote absorbing stories and that the millions who read them were unmoved by their ideals.

If the Germans could not be weaned away from their need for myth, neither could the Jews. Mosse sees the post–World War I enthusiasm for Hasidic legends (as purveyed by Martin Buber) as a falling away from the Enlightenment ideal, but not from the German component in German Jewish culture. Buber's translated Hasidic tales, says Mosse, were "laundered for their use by the emancipated," and at the same time contained a Germanic echo in "their close ties to German mysticism."

In academic life Mosse singles out the study of art history, where the distinctive Jewish contribution to the discipline was rationality. The function of the art historian was to transcend mere art appreciation and blind enthusiasm for an informed perception of the content and context of the work. The rationality of study was to supersede the disorder of mere emotion. Mosse analyzes the work of Aby Warburg as the founder of this school of criticism, Erwin Panofsky as its supreme practitioner, and Ernst Cassirer, whom he describes as wanting to tame "irrational activity within a rational critique of culture."

In his exposition of the Jewish leftists in the Weimar Republic, Mosse shows not only how they were isolated from the working class whose cause they had espoused, but also how they were repudiated by the self-consciously bourgeois Jewish community. By the time of the Weimar Republic, the Jews in Germany

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had achieved their long-sought political equality and a prosperous economic position that put them securely in the middle class. To those who had arrived, these leftist Jews were troublemakers and disturbers who would bring down everything that they had striven for over the past century.

In this respect, the German Jews shared the opinion of their fellow burghers in rejecting the Left, if for other reasons. For the Jews the only road to change was through legislation, or constitutional amendment, but not through force. Yet, Mosse points out, there was an inner contradiction in Jewish life. However conservative they were politically, they were welcoming to the cultural avant-garde. They were not only to be counted among the leading painters, writers, journalists, and theatrical personalities of the age, but a substantial number were also patrons of the arts and made up a reliable part of the audience for the new.

There is no doubt then that German Jewish life showed all the inconsistencies and varieties of opinion that testify to the vitality of a community. In religion, culture, scholarship, and politics, Jews were far from united in their views and practices. Community elections were occasions for the display of bitter religious partisanship and equally bitter political struggles; Jewish artists ranged from the most conservative to the most avant-garde; as we have seen, Jewish leftists, even those of the arcane Frankfurt School, represented a minority rather than the mainstream of Jewish thought. Yet binding them all together was a transfigured sense of Germanness and an abiding belief in the redemptive powers of *Bildung*.

In a harrowing story, as we read it now, Mosse recounts how, at the very end, a group of the "former leaders of the Jewish women's organization (Jüdischer Frauenbund) were found reading Goethe as they waited for deportation." It elicits the inevitable question that hangs in the air: Were they wrong?

We are always studying the past for clues and causes, yet it is dangerous to assume that a progression of events makes up an inevitable chain. If the high aims of the German Jews were destroyed by the juggernaut of Nazism—which also destroyed the very different communities of Eastern Europe—does this tell us something about the Jews, or about the mur-

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derous policy of the Nazi regime? Does it necessarily condemn the beliefs and strategies of the German Jews because they were vanquished by the Nazis?

Perhaps the best way to answer these questions would be to propose a few more questions. Who were these German Jews and where did their ideas come from? What were they struggling for on that difficult German ground? What was the Utopia that shimmered in their mind's eye? As a guide to the interior of German Jewish thought, George Mosse is indispensable, and *German Jews Beyond Judiasm* takes us directly to the heart of the problem.

The Great White Wail

RHYTHM-A-NING: JAZZ TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN THE '80S. *By Gary Giddins. Oxford University Press. $17.95.*

Reviewed by PETER SCHWENDENER

In *Riding on a Blue Note*, his first collection of essays, the jazz and popular music critic Gary Giddins wrote, in a piece on the alto saxophonist Art Pepper entitled "The Whiteness of the Wail," that the "best" white jazz musicians were those who, like Pepper, consciously "chose a black aesthetic as the best possible source for self-examination." Pepper, Bix Beiderbecke, Jack Teagarden, Pee Wee Russell, Bill Evans, and other white players "avoided minstrelsy and mere technique," offering the jazz listener "the only quality no black jazzman can offer—the pursuit of the white wail, a revelation of Caucasian inwit through the black idiom of the blues: a personal search fraught with peril." The peril is, of course, the undertow of drugs, violence, and early death that claimed the lives of so many black jazzmen—most famously Charlie Parker. Pepper, who was a junkie in the fifties, risked it for the sake of getting close to "the secret world of black culture—that world of genius and fire and bared emotion that promised salvation."

PETER SCHWENDENER is a jazz pianist in Chicago and a staff writer for the weekly Chicago *Reader*. He has also written for *TriQuarterly* magazine.

The theme of promised "salvation" reappears in Gary Giddins's latest collection, *Rhythm-a-ning: Jazz Tradition and Innovation in the '80s* ("Rhythm-a-ning" is the title of a piece by the late jazz pianist and composer Thelonius Monk). In an article on Jackie Wilson, Giddins writes of watching the flamboyantly dressed black pop singer perform when he, Giddins, was twelve years old: "He triggered a desire to *be* black, and to have a tuxedo, as if only that combination of mask and costume could enable one to express that much raw emotion"—the paradox, among others, being the "raw" emotion's dependence for its expression on that element of ultimate refinement, the tuxedo.

Giddins seems aware of the pathology, in himself as an adolescent and in certain musicians he writes about, of the desire to "be" some artist whose art one admires. He is primarily interested in how musicians find or liberate their distinctive voices, how they use traditions, whether those they grew up in or (as with Pepper and other "white Negroes") those they adopt, as instruments of self-discovery. In "Gypsy Soul," a piece about the Alsatian Gypsy guitarist Bireli Lagrene and his debt to his forebear Django Reinhardt, Giddins observes that "Lagrene's great accomplishment is that instead of playing Django, he used Django to unlock his own voice." The rock and pop singer Linda Ronstadt, on the other hand, not long ago surprised her fans by recording an album of "standards," classic American popular songs of the thirties and forties, such as "What's New?," "Lover Man," and "I've Got a Crush on You."

Reviewing the album in a piece called "Chilled Classics and the Real Thing," Giddins excuses her "craving for good songs and a mature and monied audience," but accuses her, amusingly yet incisively, of using these songs of her parents' generation to work out her guilt at having rebelled against them, along with the rest of her generation, in the sixties. (Ronstadt is on record as having said exactly this, in an interview in the *New York Times*, which Giddins quotes.) Like Art Pepper in his search for salvation through the "foreign musical syntax" of black music, Ronstadt seeks it through that of another generation; yet unlike Pepper, she's not interested in self-discovery, and her handling of the old songs, which Giddins analyzes, is dull

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and inept. She wants to "*be* Frank Sinatra," as opposed to imaginatively interpreting, for contemporary audiences, the songs Frank Sinatra sang. The difference between Linda Ronstadt's and Frank Sinatra's handling of "[I Don't Stand a] Ghost of a Chance" and the rest of those songs, though Sinatra was only slightly older than Ronstadt when he made his classic recordings of them, is that "Sinatra managed to sound as though he'd lived their bittersweet epiphanies," whether he actually had or not.

In a piece called "How to Not Stuff a Jazz Classic," Giddins considers other, less ridiculous abuses of tradition. Since around the late seventies there has been a pronounced "repertory" movement in jazz, an attempt on the part of such orchestras as the New York Jazz Repertory Company, the National Jazz Ensemble, and the Smithsonian Jazz Repertory Ensemble, in Giddins's words, to "recreate or recapture" the classic jazz of the swing and other eras—to bring to life, in their original arrangements, works by Beiderbecke, Jelly Roll Morton, James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington, Thelonius Monk, and others. Giddins is sympathetic, but finds that so far "the jazz past continues to frustrate its most reverent interpreters":

> Sincerity is not authenticity, and the laborious exercises that so often pass for rendition are usually a kind of taxidermy. It requires a valorous internalization of the old styles, or at least the realization that interpretation is an act of the imagination, to knock the stuffing out of those varnished monuments.

The main problem that groups such as the Smithsonian Ensemble face is that of swing, the elusive musical quality Giddins defines as "a rhythmic consistency that elicits a physical response," there being as many kinds of swing as there are individual musicians. Giddins's definition nicely makes his case against both nostalgia and what he elsewhere calls "half-baked historicism": a physical response, if nothing else, can only be utterly personal as well as of the moment.

The recent emergence of the repertory movement is one of the symptoms Giddins sees of the current state of jazz, which he terms "neoclassical." Following the avant-garde movement, led by Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, John Coltrane, Albert Ayler, and

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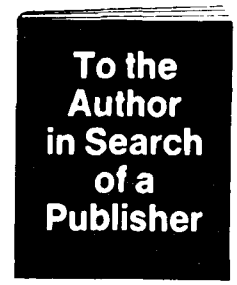

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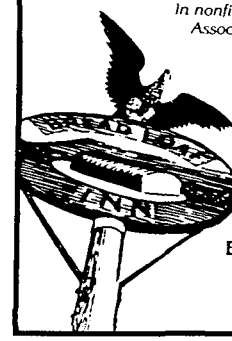

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others, that dominated jazz from the early sixties to the mid-seventies, players weaned on that period have come to feel paradoxically confined by its lessons of freedom, and are now turning, as Giddins writes, to " '20s' classicism, '30s' swing, '40s' bop, and '50s' soul for repertoire and expressive wisdom. They are, in effect, going home again." He cites, among other examples of this going home, recent recordings of spirituals, marches, blues, and ragtime pieces by such contemporary players as saxophonists Arthur Blythe and Anthony Braxton and the pianist Muhal Richard Abrams. There is a growing consciousness among musicians of the compositional, as opposed to the improvisational, aspect of the jazz equation. Giddins feels that "the compositional end of the jazz equation has the upper hand in the 1980s," and that this dominant concern with form has brought about the renewed interest in the music's "repertory," as it has only recently been considered, which chiefly includes the formal achievements of Ellington, Monk, and other jazz composers.

Art Pepper, a victim, as it were, of the "valorous internalization" Giddins prescribes for musicians who would achieve expressive power in a tradition not their own, reappears in *Rhythm-a-ning*, in an obituary (he died in 1982, at fifty-six). Elsewhere in the book there are pieces, many excellent and all worth reading, on Thelonius Monk, Frank Sinatra, Ornette Coleman, Woody Herman, and Teddy Wilson; on such European avant-gardists as the pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach and the saxophonist Willem Breuker; and on several younger players currently, as Giddins sees them, on the cutting edge of jazz, among them the trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, the tenor saxophonist David Murray, and the vocalist Carmen Lundy. My favorite piece in the book is not about a musician but about a song, "Body and Soul" by Johnny Green, "the most recorded American popular song of all time (nearly 3000 versions)." Giddins illustrates his assertion that the song's magic lies "in its ability to inspire musicians to plumb the depths of their own creativity," or to unlock their own voices, by comparing thirty-four recorded versions of the song, from Louis Armstrong's in 1930 to those of Archie Shepp, Bill Evans, and others through the late seventies.

I hesitate, for obvious reasons, even to mention the name of the late Philip Larkin in a review of such a book of jazz criticism as Giddins's. But Giddins, as a critic, is interesting to consider in view of Larkin's contention, in his recently reissued classic *All What Jazz*, that "Jazz writers as a class are committed to a party line that represents jazz as one golden chain stretching from Buddy Bolden to Sun Ra, and their task is facilitated by the practice jazz magazines have of employing several reviewers (the trad man, the mod man, the blues man) to ensure that nobody ever has to write about anything they really detest." *Rhythm-a-ning* is notable for the variety of musicians to whom Giddins, the jazz critic for the *Village Voice*, has obviously listened closely. Whether or not he personally subscribes to the golden chain theory, he seems as cordially fond of Cecil Taylor as of Woody Herman; he is, in any case, one of the few critics who can write intelligently and engagingly about both of them.

The Imitation of Dostoevsky

LESS THAN ONE: SELECTED ESSAYS. *By Joseph Brodsky. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $25.*

Reviewed by GARY SAUL MORSON

Historically, Russian autobiography has proceeded from a daring premise: if a socially engaged writer can be both penetrating and honest enough, then, by recalling the events of his life, he can also tell the story of his time. Alexander Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts* exemplifies such an interpenetration of life and times, and, in the process, illustrates in remarkable ways how one may talk about oneself without self-indulgence. Whether describing his relations with Proudhon, Garibaldi, Rothschild, Bakunin, or Marx, Herzen neither exaggerates nor diminishes his role.

GARY SAUL MORSON, associate professor of Russian literature at Northwestern University, is the author of *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's "Diary of a Writer" and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* and, forthcoming from Stanford University Press, *Hidden in Plain View: Narrative and Creative Potentials in "War and Peace."*

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His is a rare dignity that can avoid both self-aggrandizement and false modesty. He accounts for the failures of his marriage and family life without self-pity; and the reader comes to realize that Herzen will always possess too great a fund of dignity either to insist on his own profound insight or to overdramatize his moral weaknesses. As we learn about Herzen's past and thoughts, we also learn to recognize the voice and face of honesty.

Few of Herzen's imitators came close to his success. Dostoevsky, for one, clearly failed in *The Diary of a Writer*, that odd melange of fiction, journalism, and autobiography, which Dostoevsky recommended to his readers as the solution to all of the world's contradictions. With the same defensive fanaticism that one recognizes in some of his characters, Dostoevsky identified the pattern of his own life as the pattern of history in the making: just as he started out as a socialist and suffered punishment in (Siberian) exile before at last seeing the light and becoming a Russian Orthodox believer, so, too, would the Russian intelligentsia undergo a process of suffering and conversion. Eventually, Russia herself would be transformed in the same way, and rise up to teach the nations. In short, mankind would be saved by "the imitation of Dostoevsky."

Joseph Brodsky's *Less Than One: Selected Essays* situates itself squarely within the Russian autobiographical tradition. A collection of occasional pieces about literature, modern civilization, politics, and the author's life, the whole emerges as greater than the sum of its parts. From the first essay to the last, Brodsky conveys an image of himself as more than a mere essayist, as more than another émigré poet recording his impressions. Rather, he sees himself as a man whose life is especially significant, not only because the lives of all great poets are especially significant, but also because the experience of leaving Russia for the West has somehow imparted to him a key to understanding the problems of the age. It is not that we need to understand the times to understand the author, as some autobiographers would say; no, Brodsky suggests that we need to understand him in order to understand the age.

We need to understand, first of all, what it means for a future poet to grow up in postwar Russia. Brodsky's sketches of his childhood, of the "room and a half" he shared as an adult with his parents, and of his eventual departure from the Soviet Union capture, as few reminiscences do, the insufferable drabness of the workers' paradise. As Brodsky describes them, Russian factories, prisons, and schools all turn out to be indistinguishable, not only because they are all places of incarceration, but also because they really all look pretty much the same. Wherever you go, he tells us, you see the same portraits of Lenin and secret police founder Felix Dzerzhinsky; and from college classroom to KGB interrogation chamber, from Leningrad to Alma-Ata, you can't escape a "blue horizontal stripe at eye level" in every room, a stripe "running unfailingly across the whole country, like the line of an infinite common denominator: in halls, hospitals, factories, prisons, corridors of communal apartments. The only place I didn't encounter it was in wooden peasant huts." What does the stripe mean? "Nobody ever asked why it was there. Nobody could have answered." Like most of the tedium that is life under Communism, it is there just because it is there; because Russia is the land of small rooms, long lines, and poets who emigrate.

This poet responded to the drabness of tyranny by prizing above all else experimentalism and novelty. No matter what the subject of his essays, we sense that the real subject matter is the eternal Manichaean conflict between Dullness and Poetry, a conflict never enacted more perfectly than in modern Russia. As Brodsky describes Cavafy's poems about a mythmaker's Alexandria, we understand that he is describing the real Leningrad: "a squalid and desolate place in that stage of decline when the routine character of decay weakens the very sentiment of regret." We may balk when Brodsky describes W. H. Auden as the greatest thinker of the twentieth century, but when we reflect on what such an unseen mentor might mean to a poet surrounded by the blue horizontal stripe, we forgive him his exaggerations.

But although we forgive the exaggerations, we do not necessarily believe them. As Dostoevsky was carried away by his own experiences, so, too, is Brodsky, who advances a strange theory of history and civilization, and of the importance of Brodsky and a few other poets within it. Brodsky's theory is a mixture of pure literary formalism, romantic glorification of the poet, and Russian apocalypticism.

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Its most salient element is linguistic reductionism.

By linguistic reductionism I mean Brodsky's curious notion that what shapes history is language. In general terms, of course, the idea that a people's fate is shaped by its language is a staple of romanticism, but Brodsky takes this idea to truly Russian extremes. Native speakers of English, he argues, cannot understand the subtleties of evil because the language is not declined and its syntax is not as convoluted as Russian. Other remarkable properties are attributed to the fact that Russian words are long, and that nouns often occur at the end of Russian sentences. It is syntax, grammar, and vocabulary—not economics, politics, or interest groups—that shape history. "Because civilizations are finite, in the life of each of them comes a moment when centers cease to hold. What keeps them at such times from disintegration is not legions but languages. Such was the case with Rome." No, the forces that historians usually discuss are themselves but "distant echoes" of the development of the language. And the development of the language depends most of all on the poets. When Providence wants to save or condemn a land, it produces or stifles a poet.

When applied to the history of literature itself, this sort of thinking yields rather odd results. Contrary to what you may have thought, neither psychology nor philosophy, "neither the inevitable intricacy of his subject matter nor even the unique profundity of his mind," made Dostoevsky a great writer, according to Brodsky's essay "The Power of the Elements." No, "it was the tool or, rather, the texture of the material he was using, i.e., the Russian language." Because nouns are at the end of sentences, Dostoevsky avoided "your analytical language of 'either/or'—this is the language of 'although.'" Because Russian words are polysyllabic, Dostoevsky's prose "reveals the elemental, primeval force of the phenomena covered by a word a lot better than any rationalization possibly could." With "nearly sadistic" intensity, Dostoevsky allowed language to go where it would, and thus took advantage of the inevitable "friction . . . between the metaphysics of the subject matter and that of the language." Dostoevsky may have thought he was influenced by his experiences in Siberia and by Christian thought, but personal experience is always "redundant" and "it is syntax rather than the creed" that is responsible for his books.

For Brodsky, Dostoevsky represents the acme of literature and therefore of civilization. Dostoevsky's recognition that "prose is, apart from anything, an artifice, a bag of tricks" led right to European modernism, which is itself the distilled essence of what art should be. Unfortunately, "Dostoevsky went perhaps too high for Providence's liking. So it sends in a Tolstoy as if to ensure that Dostoevsky in Russia gets no continuum." I quote Brodsky's essay "Catastrophes in the Air" directly, lest it seem that I am misrepresenting him.

Tolstoy is the dark force in this Manichaean struggle, not primarily because he was a moralist who wrote *What Is Art?* but because he was a realist—because he wrote *Anna Karenina*. As pure linguistic play produces all that is good in civilization, so mimesis produces all that is evil. "Guided by this world view [realism], a writer and a policeman rival each other in precision," and so the realist writer and the police state are, according to Brodsky, eternal allies. In Russia, these forces overwhelmed the modernism that succeeded in the West, and made Brodsky's homeland the drab hell that it is.

Those whose thought is shaped by "analytic" English rather than "synthetic" Russian (or who are suspicious of such binary oppositions) might imagine that Communism, Lenin, and Stalin had something to do with the path taken by Russian culture. One might suppose that, according to Brodsky, Russian literature abandoned Dostoevsky for realism and socialist realism because Communist rulers shot, imprisoned, censored, and exiled unorthodox writers. Not so; for to argue this way would be to violate Brodsky's linguistic reductionism. Language and literature are not results, but the only significant causes, of social change. Russian writers are themselves to blame: "Heartless as it may sound in many ways, the condition Russian prose finds itself in today is of its own doing. . . . Taking politics into consideration is therefore an oxymoron, or rather a vicious circle, for politics fills the vacuum left in people's minds and hearts precisely by art." Can it be that the blue line was painted across the interrogation chamber by Leo Tolstoy?

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If Marxist dialectical materialism attributes all historical change to economics and class conflict, Brodsky ascribes a similar power to vocabulary and syntactic convolution—another form of "dialectical" materialism. At times, one wonders whether Brodsky arrives at these conclusions by the method he attributes to Dostoevsky: following the cadences of a subordinate clause to whatever conclusion might emerge. To reverse the Duchess's advice to Alice, take care of the sound and the sense will take care of itself.

A great many of these essays seem to be written according to a handful of rhetorical formulae: First, make plentiful use of intensifying words, such as *eternal, inevitable, simply, itself,* and *literally,* but do not pay too close attention to what they actually mean: "Pushkin's prophecy, put into his Bronze Horseman's mouth: 'All flags will come to us as guests!' received its literal incarnation"; "Its [civilization's] main vehicle—speaking both metaphorically and literally—is translation."

Second, use vague abstractions—"prosody absorbs death," "prosody, which is simply a repository of time within language," "in the inanimate world water may be regarded as a condensed form of time"—and then interrupt them with a phrase like "after all" to suggest that the meaning is utterly transparent: "Song is, after all, restructured time, toward which mute space is inherently hostile." Next, link statements of this sort with such phrases as "if only because" or "if for no other reason than" in order to imply, but not specify, a logical connection: "The unbearableness of the future is easier to face than that of the present if only because human foresight is much more destructive than anything that the future can bring about." Fourth, shock the reader with a direct reference to sex: "An individual perishes not so much by the sword as by the penis"; "Ninety percent of the best lyric poetry is written post-coitum. . . . Homosexuality as such enforces self-analysis more than heterosexuality does."

Perhaps one reason Brodsky hates Tolstoy so much is that Tolstoy satirized just the sort of declamatory writing Brodsky produces. Throughout his life, Tolstoy insisted that clarity was the supreme value in writing, and that if one needed to repeat the same word several times in a few lines, one should not be deterred by any rules of rhetoric. Falsity, he believed, derives from the standard devices of "poetic" writers: choosing "exalted" expressions, phrasing for "effect," and striving above all else for the "striking" or "interesting."

In his sketches of his life in Russia, Brodsky tells us concretely and directly what it feels like to live as an adult with one's parents in a living arrangement from which there is no escape into privacy. When he talks about Akhmatova and Nadezhda Mandelstam, we sense his striving to arrive at a moral judgment, his desire to praise or blame real people, not abstractions like Time, Realism, Prosody, or Language. At such moments, we recognize a writer in the tradition of Tolstoy and Herzen. We wish for more description of ordinary experiences and less imitation of Dostoevsky.

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
Kenneth M. Greene

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The Reader Replies

Catholic Itinerary

I am both moved and irritated by Heinz Kuehn's "Catholic Itinerary" in the Autumn 1986 SCHOLAR. Like Aristides, in the same issue, the sixties is not his idea of a good time. Nor mine, a man of their generation. I thought it was a horrible time—our own Cultural Revolution—and I still think so, but I also think a lot of important work got done despite or because of, we'll never know which, the psychodrama and the silliness and the stupidity. Not to mention the war, which had us all at each other's throats. Of course the churches, too, like our colleges and universities, were caught up by the turmoil and changed, irrevocably. Much of what he says reminds me of my own experiences as a college teacher.

Still, something's missing, or wrong, in this account. While I can understand why silent detachment might be attractive to men of good will in his church these days, the grounds of this man's retreat are obscure. He says he found the unrestrained emotionalism of the sixties and seventies offensive, the style of the modern celebrants amateurish, and he waited in vain for the Church to come to his aid. The clear, logical intellect of the Church had always heretofore, he says, cut through the gabble of the world, but had—unaccountably—vanished or gone berserk after Vatican II. But where is Mr. Kuehn's intellect? You would never know, from his account, that his church is presently riven by serious disagreements over matters of substance, not form. He looks and sounds like what he is, a European aesthete, retiring in aristocratic disdain from the vulgarity of the modern American church. We've been down this road before.

Mr. Kuehn makes much of the Church's clarity and logic, its historic insistence on calling things by their right names, making the appropriate distinctions, insisting on the eternal truths in the face of the reverse proclivities of sinful man. The Church, he thinks, has been the one great civilizing center and force in Europe since the collapse of Rome but has now either forgotten its historic role or been abandoned in the modern, or post-modern age. I am not a member of his or any church, nevertheless I also appreciate the virtues of clarity, right names and distinctions and it surprises me quite a bit that having broken his vow of silence and come before us with his story he has nothing to say about the things he wants his Church to be clear, or clearer, about. Or does he think that no one is interested in clarity any more, not even the readers of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR? I don't think that is true. I for one would like to hear what an intelligent, well-read layman who is convinced he knows what the true church is all about, thinks the correct line ought to be on the range of matters, sexual and political, currently in dispute. I thought the Church, or Pope John Paul, had made its positions very clear indeed; if Pope John Paul hasn't succeeded in cutting through the gabble, it hasn't been for lack of trying (so it seems to a rank outsider); since Mr. Kuehn thinks differently, I wish he had given us some examples of what Catholic clarity ought to be. Or might be—surely he could give us some *hypothetical* examples, without appearing in the offensive role of a merely captious critic?

There is one question that I, half-Jewish like him, find particularly nagging, and I don't understand why it doesn't bother him too. (Maybe it does but he won't admit it.) What happened to that wonderful Catholic clarity and humanity when it became evident to the Vatican, early on in the 1940s, that Germany was systematically exterminating the undesirable "races" of Europe, with special attention to the Jews? Where, then, was the civilized conscience of Europe? Think what the Church could have done, in mobilizing world opinion, and guilt, on this matter; instead, silence, acquiescence. It would do nothing to jeopardize its own in Germany or occupied Europe. So the Church missed its big chance, its heroic chance, the chance of a millennium. A chance to show that it stood for something besides a reactionary feudalism. We must hope, for all sorts of reasons, that it will never get another. Mr. Kuehn is distressed that his church no longer seems to count for much, but he should not be surprised. It wasn't there when the *world* needed it. People of conscience discovered, in World War II, that they would just have to get along without it, and they have been doing so ever since, with about the same ratio of success to failure as always.

PIERS LEWIS

In his article, "Catholic Itinerary," Heinz Kuehn writes of his remembrances of a "Church that was possessed by a passion for meaning and guided by the invisible power of a body of law and tradition." He asks "what today constitutes the 'real Church,'

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the Church of the seamless garment, the Church that has mystery and style, scholarship and great literature, and (in the purest meaning of the phrase) a significant language."

Mystery and style disappeared somewhere in the gap between the old and the new liturgy. Somehow the sense of God's presence (and thus the mystery) was lost. Perhaps it was lost in the transition from the exclusively private worship of the past to the exclusive emphasis on participation as community of the present. A more balanced mixture might help restore mystery. Perhaps mystery is obscured by the gap between the inevitable lessening of the sense of formality from the increasing sense of community and greater lay participation and the cumbersome formality of the traditional mode of addressing God that was retained in the prayers of the liturgy. The result is a disconnectedness between the community and the prayers with which it addresses God that makes God seem remote from the experience of the community.

The Church with a passion for meaning may be floundering on the false dichotomy of secular vs. sacred. In his October 1986 column in *Natural History* magazine, Stephen Jay Gould called dichotomy "that favorite among all intellectual games—take a complex issue, discard its subtleties, then allocate all possible opinions into two categories."

The passion for meaning is being forced underground by the protectors of Church tradition and law because they tend to allocate all dissent to the secular category, believing that dissenters have been seduced by secular culture. They see their mission as standing firm against the evil of this secular onslaught on the Church. They do not hear the subtleties that distinguish dissenters from the popular secular culture.

On the other hand, the seamless garment is also floundering on another dichotomy—progress vs. fear of change. Dissenters who believe changes are necessary tend to categorize objections to particular changes as fear of and resistance to any and all change. They do not hear the subtleties. They either do not hear the real concerns of the objectors or dismiss them as irrelevant. Both dissenter and protector can learn much from each other, but only if each recognizes that he has much to learn. Only then will the listening and learning necessary to rebuild a common language begin. Neither dissenter nor protector has plumbed deeply enough to find this language. Neither protector nor dissenter has an exclusive option on the guidance of the Spirit.

MARILYN KRAMER
Wausau, Wisconsin

As a former Catholic I applaud the lucid and moving essay, "Catholic Itinerary," by Heinz R. Kuehn. It left me wondering to what extent adversity is a prerequisite to faith; and to what extent, in an age "in search of excellence," mediocrity can generate such adversity in America.

CLAUDE CLAYTON SMITH
Ohio Northern University
Ada, Ohio

HEINZ R. KUEHN replies: I understand Mr. Lewis's irritation, and am sympathetic to it. We live in two different worlds, and while I can easily enter his, he apparently can find no access to mine and chides me for not opening a door for him. Specifically, he stands outside the Church; I am part of its cluttered and noisy household. As an outsider, he judges the Church by its approach to and decisions on issues. I can afford to be silent on them because my faith and my own vision of the Church are still intact. To him, "the range of matters, sexual and political, currently in dispute" are, if I read him correctly, the only matters of substance. I, too, consider them matters of substance. But as a member of the household, I am, to stay with the metaphor, not so much concerned at this moment about a leaking roof, but about the things that make a household, *this* household, my family: experience of the sacred and a sense of mystery, a commitment to whatever is good, true, and beautiful, scholarship, discipline, community, and language. (Interestingly, sex and politics, because they make the papers, are precisely the issues an outsider *would* choose as examples of intra-ecclesiastical dispute.)

In short, Mr. Lewis expected a partisan review of the Church. Instead, I gave him an insider's appraisal of the Church, as I saw it on two continents, under different regimes, at various stages of my journey. He expected intellectual clarity on issues. Instead, I expressed profound regret and sadness over the depreciation and perhaps irretrievable loss of values that are precious to me and that once characterized the inner life of the Church.

What baffles me is that Mr. Lewis finds the grounds of my "retreat" obscure. If I have failed to explain them satisfactorily, he can find in Miss Kramer's response to my essay a lucid and elegant elaboration and justification of the difficult practice of occasional silence.

Desecrating the Holy Woman

If the paragraph from Chapter 13 of *Coming of Age in Samoa* cited by Professor Rappaport (THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Winter 1987) is placed, as it must be, in the context of the question that Margaret Mead was sent to Samoa, by Boas, specifically to answer—"Are the disturbances which vex our adolescents due to the nature of adolescence itself or to the civilization?"—it will be seen that Mead's gen-

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eral conclusion of 1928 does indeed exclude the making of "any explanations" of these "disturbances" in terms of "the nature of adolescence itself."

That this was, in fact, Mead's conclusion is confirmed by her reference (*Social Organization of Manu'a, Honolulu*), also circa 1928 concerning Samoa, to "the phenomenon of social pressure and its *absolute determination* in shaping the individuals within its bounds . . ." (emphasis added). There are thus substantive grounds for my account of the nature of Mead's conclusion.

It is specifically *this* extreme conclusion which, in the light of modern scientific knowledge is indeed preposterous, that in my book *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* I present evidence to refute.

DEREK FREEMAN
Emeritus Professor of Anthropology
Research School of Pacific Studies
The Australian National University
Canberra, Australia

ROY A. RAPPAPORT replies: This exchange has become a tiresome controversy over contexts. Professor Freeman seems to have combed Mead's corpus for phrases and sentences that can be construed in ways convicting her of his charges. He offers us, in corroboration of his reading of Chapter 13 of *Coming of Age in Samoa*, an apparently unequivocal quotation from *Social Organization of Manu'a,* the scholarly account of her Samoan research. The paragraph previous to that in which his quotation appears begins as follows:

"In a society in which the chief's eldest son invariably succeeds to office, education becomes vitally important. This particular child and no other must be trained to discharge, at least passably, the duties of his position. But where any boy from a descent group may hold the title, society can afford to sit back and let diverse humanity develop without giving undue thought to individual idiosyncrasies. Those who lack judgment, "listen with difficulty" (another *inborn trait* over which eyebrows are raised helplessly), "learn with difficulty," "speak with difficulty"; will not be selected for important posts." (*Social Organization of Manu'a*, 1969:82, orig. pub. 1930, emphasis mine)

And later in the same paragraph:

"Lack of judgment, lack of skill, lack of good temper, lack of amenableness, are all *temperamental* [i.e., innate] defects for which no individual is to be blamed. They are not, properly speaking, sins, but only blemishes, like a twisted spine or an impediment of speech." (emphasis mine)

It would not only be uncharitable but unreasonable to understand the few words Freeman cites as intended by the author to contradict these immediately preceding passages. Although the context is not entirely clear, the significance of the phrase Professor Freeman spotlights in support of his interpretation is further illuminated by the succeeding sentence, "I mean to stress rather the particular implication in the lives of individuals of a particular kind of social pattern." I understand Mead to be saying, simply, that particular "social patterns" or cultures, impose themselves in distinctive ways upon the temperamentally (i.e., innately or genetically) diverse individuals coming of age in the societies in which they prevail, and that, conversely, individuals, although temperamentally distinctive or even unique, cannot escape from the formative powers of the social patterns or cultures guiding and constraining their own ontogenies. She further argued, later in the same chapter and elsewhere, that all cultures give freer rein to some temperaments than to others and that those who would, for reasons of temperament, be admired in one society might be considered deviants in another.

The conclusion that Freeman asserts was Mead's is, indeed, preposterous, but it verges on the preposterous to attribute it to her. Her view of temperament and its interplay with social pattern was naive by today's standards but it was a far cry from any doctrine of absolute cultural determinism. It may be that the inescapable nature of culture's formative powers led her to use the adjective "absolute" on which Professor Freeman hangs so much, or her choice of that word may have simply been unfortunate. There is no way of knowing now, although the context does clearly indicate that she recognized the importance of biological factors in human behavior. Much more mysterious is why Professor Freeman should invest so much in a microscopic examination of the work of an anthropologist still in her twenties for ambiguous expressions that, sixty years later, can, through such forensic devices as decontextualization, be forced into the service of an argument that is at once dubious and irrelevant to anything beyond that anthropologist's reputation. The most wasteful aspect of the enterprise may be that it cannot help but distract Professor Freeman from producing the rich account of Samoan culture that his many years of fieldwork qualify him to provide.

Erratum

Our columnist Aristides wishes to apologize for an error in his column "The Bore Wars" in the Winter 1987 issue. In the second paragraph of that column he mistakenly gave Madame de Sévigné's "quite ungrateful daughter" to Madame de Staël—a case of forcible adoption to which neither of these remarkable women was likely to have agreed.

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Marcel Proust
translated and edited by Jean Autret, William Burford, and Phillip J. Wolfe

Introduction by Richard Macksey

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